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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the use of reading workbooks in elementary school classrooms. Sections of the paper discuss the purposes of workbooks, the function of workbooks (how workbooks serve both teachers and students), the implications of these observations about workbooks where developers of basal programs are concerned, and the sufficiency, efficiency, and effectiveness of workbook tasks. The bulk of the paper contains 20 guidelines for workbook tasks, suggesting ways of evaluating such materials and preparing children to use them. Examples from workbooks are offered to show the negative aspects of workbook design, thereby illustrating some of the factors workbook designers may want to consider if their goal is to provide materials that will help students learn to read. (RL)

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CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF READING

Reading Education Report No. 27

THE PURPOSES, USES, AND CONTENTS OF WORKBOOKS AND SOME GUIDELINES FOR TEACHERS AND PUBLISHERS

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Special Note

The examples of workbook tasks used in this paper are from several widely used basal series. The examples are used to give some "real-life" verification to some workbook problems identified by the author of this paper. The selection of one publisher's material over another's was quite arbitrary. The use of examples from these basal programs does not imply that other programs, not represented in the paper, do not have problem workbook tasks. Rather, the intent is that the points illustrated by the examples be applied by teachers and publishers to any workbook type materials being used, considered, or developed.

This paper is about the reading workbooks that are used in elementary school classrooms. Workbooks that are designed to be a component of reading instruction are a part of essentially every basal reading program. In this paper, the term workbook is used generically, and indicates a consumable material that is associated with a basal program and is to be used by individual students. Included in this discussion are workbooks, practice books, skill sheets, mastery lessons, and any other pieces of paper provided by a publisher for students to write on. (Also included are ditto masters that are available for teachers to use with their own pieces of paper.)

The Purposes of Workbooks

What purposes do workbooks serve? Do teachers and students use workbooks? Are workbooks important to reading instruction? And, to carry this line of questioning to its extreme, "Are workbooks necessary?" The first two questions, "What purposes do workbooks serve?" and "Do teachers and students use workbooks?" will be discussed in the next sections of this presentation. But to the questions "Are workbooks important to reading?" and "Are workbooks necessary?" I will, in the absence of data, give a personal response: for some students, maybe, for others, a very definite yes. I know of no hard data from any carefully undertaken studies that contrast a reading program that uses workbooks with a reading program that does not. But, given that

the practice of what is being learned is a time-honored concommitant to learning, and that workbook activities are created to give students practice in what they are learning, it does not sound too risky to say that workbooks are important to the kind of reading instruction that takes place in American classrooms.

What They Say about Workbooks

What do we really know about workbooks, their design, their effectiveness, and their use? Part of the difficulty of discussing workbooks arises from the lack of previous study on workbooks. An investigation of the literature of reading education reveals that very little has been written, for example, about the relationship of the content of workbooks to that of teachers' guides and students' readers, about the sequence of tasks that occurs in workbooks, about the instructional design or quality of the activities that appear in the workbooks, or about the relevance of those activities to the acquisition of reading. The few papers about workbooks that have been published in the past 10 years are based primarily on the observations and concerns that their authors have about the uses of workbooks. These papers are not intended to be an extensive analysis of the design, relevance, and efficacy of workbook tasks.

Better-than-typical examples of such papers are two 1974 articles by Dolores Durkin who, as a result of visiting elementary school

classrooms for a period of six years, made some observations about the use of instructional materials. In one of these papers she presents findings about classroom instruction that were "readily apparent and surprisingly persistent." She found that: (a) teachers were spending time on unnecessary and even erroneous instruction, and (b) such instruction often was the result of an unquestioning use of basal reader manuals, basal readers, and workbooks. She described several workbook-based teaching events that: (a) were unnecessary, or (b) represented "turning means into ends-in-themselves," or (c) constituted irrelevant and non-essential practice, or (d) were incorrect instruction. Each of these events was based on what was in the workbooks the teachers were using and was carried out because "the children have to know that in order to fill out the next two pages in their workbook" or "the manual said to do it" (Durkin, 1974, pp. 13-17).

What do teachers in training learn about workbooks? The authors of some much used reading methods textbooks give workbooks either short discussion or no discussion. In a survey of recent editions of 12 such books, I found that what was said about workbooks ranged from one line to four pages (and these are all <u>very</u> long books). One book lists some strengths and weaknesses of basal reader workbooks. The weaknesses included "are boringly factual," "emphasize mechanics, word recognition more often than comprehension," "often too hard for

lower third of class, yet lacking in challenge for superior pupils," "often lacking in clarity of directions and inadequate explanation of purpose of . . . ." The strengths include "stress sequential learning, help develop skills," "aid in diagnosing difficulties," "save teacher time for preparation," "are prepared by skilled persons," "provide for extensive, effective drill" (Spache & Spache, 1973).

The authors of another book advise teachers to consider several factors in examining workbooks: the adequacy of practice on more critical comprehension skills (such as summarizing, drawing inferences, and sequencing); the sufficiency of workbook exercises (Are there enough to allow students to develop mastery?); the control of vocabulary in the exercises; and the likelihood that the exercises can be worked independently (Carnine & Silbert, 1979).

Another author points out that workbooks can have educational value and that they can serve as diagnostic instruments. A study of errors made by children "will suggest to the alert teacher where further instruction is needed." Like many other authors, he cautions that the way teachers use workbooks determines how effective workbooks are (Heilman, 1971).

Still another textbook author lists criteria for the selection of workbooks. These include the need for workbook exercises to: (a) be related to the reading lesson of the day, (b) be matched to the reading

levels of the children using them, (c) be used discriminatingly, (d) be used for a small portion of the working day, (e) be used for appropriate reading skills, (f) be matched to the children's ability (Zintz, 1977).

The Function of Workbooks

Let's move from what authors say about workbooks to a discussion of how workbooks are used in classrooms. Workbooks function in a variety of ways for teachers and students. I will first discuss how workbooks serve teachers.

How Workbooks Serve Teachers

Some ways in which workbooks serve teachers are obvious and others are not so obvious. Among the obvious is that workbooks permit teachers to keep some students occupied so that other students in the class can be taught in small groups.

An equally obvious but much less frequently mentioned function of workbooks is that they provide the teacher with what is often the only clear and uncompromised feedback about what each student can do. No such unequivocal feedback about student performance is available to a teacher during other parts of a reading period. Typically, a teacher working with a group of students will ask one student to read a passage or to answer some questions. If that student's response is acceptable,

the teacher will move to another student. The teacher must assume that the students who are not responding are able to read that passage and answer those questions.

In contrast, workbook activities require students to work independently. How students perform in their workbook activities gives a teacher information about the performance of each student on all parts of a task. This knowledge permits the teacher to make decisions about whether or not additional instruction is needed for students, or whether students can skip ahead. From this point it follows that workbook tasks can be diagnostic and prescriptive tools and that they can be used by teachers to evaluate the performance of their students.

Workbooks not only provide the teacher with information about each student, but they also allow the teacher to provide individualized instruction for the student. They can be and usually are an essential component of individualized instruction plans. Sets of workbook tasks can permit students to learn a body of information at their own rate and do so independently of the teacher.

In addition to these obvious functions, workbook use includes a function that is not so obvious. I hesitate to bring up this final point for fear that it will be interpreted as "Workbooks are good because they serve supervisors in their roles as classroom snoops." However, I would like to say that workbooks <u>can</u> serve supervisors of classroom reading programs in their roles of helping teachers become

instructionally effective. When supervisors check student workbooks, they can not only gain information about how students are learning, but they can also make some very strong inferences about how teachers are teaching. I agree that supervisors must also observe teachers teaching and students learning for a more complete picture of what is happening, but I argue that a supervisor can acquire a lot of information about what has been going on in a classroom by checking student workbooks.

I spend a certain portion of my life working with teachers in classrooms; one of my routine procedures is to walk around the desks and pick up and flip through students' workbooks. I check to see (a) if the work pages have been done, (b) if they have been graded, (c) what the error rate is on each page, and (d) what type of errors the students have made. Two minutes spent in this activity is worth hours of classroom observation; it is in a sense a first pass at gathering information that will help me help a teacher.

In concluding this section on how workbooks serve teachers, it seems appropriate to say that well-designed workbooks containing useful activities can be partners with teachers in the initial teaching of what is new and in the maintenance of what has already been taught.

How Workbooks Serve Students

How do workbooks serve students? Well developed workbooks containing well constructed tasks can serve students in many ways:

1. Workbooks can provide students with a means of practicing details of what has been taught in the reading lesson.
2. Workbooks can provide extra practice on aspects of learning to read that are difficult.
3. Workbooks can provide intermittent review of what has been taught in, for example, phonics, word meaning, and text comprehension.
4. Workbooks can provide activities in which students must synthesize what they have learned or make applications to new examples or situations.
5. Workbooks can provide students with a sense of accomplishment, when the work is "do-able," worthy, challenging, and has some "payoff." (This is not to imply that all tasks simultaneously have all of those qualities, but only that they should be incorporated into tasks as often as possible.)
6. Workbooks can provide practice in following directions (an aspect of learning whose importance extends far beyond following directions in order to do workbook tasks).
7. Workbooks can provide students with practice in a variety of formats that they will use when they take tests.
8. Workbooks can provide students with practice in working independently (another aspect of learning whose importance stretches far beyond doing workbook tasks). Most workbook

tasks are to be done by students who are working without the help of a teacher; such training, beginning in the primary grades, probably does prepare students for the teaching and learning modes of the upper elementary grades and secondary school.

9. Workbooks can provide students with practice in writing. Writing is an often neglected area in the elementary curriculum.

These are some, but not all, of the purposes to students of workbook tasks.

Workbooks are not without their critics, however. A frequently heard criticism of workbook activities is that they serve no students, only the teacher. The contention is that if a student has already mastered the goal of a workbook task, the practicing of it in a workbook is trivial and usually boring. Conversely, if a student does not know how to do a task, the attempts at the task are nonproductive, sometimes counterproductive, and almost always frustrating. When workbook tasks have no relation to what is done in the rest of the lesson, when workbooks consist primarily of tasks that are assessments of what only some students already know (from sources other than the reading program, as well as from the reading program), when workbooks consist of tasks

that are out of sequence or peripheral to the main line instruction, then such a criticism has some validity. But, is such a pessimistic view of workbooks warranted in view of how workbooks are actually used?

The Use of Workbooks

Do teachers and students use workbooks? A classroom observation study we did last year gives some idea of how extensively workbooks are used in classrooms. For this study observers watched a total of 90 reading periods of 45 teachers working in first- through sixth-grade classrooms in three different school districts. The observers recorded the use of basal program readers, teachers' guides, workbooks, and other supplemental materials during reading periods. (They also recorded the use of materials not associated with the adopted basal.) The classrooms in which the observations took place were in school districts that had adopted one or more basal programs. The adopted programs had been in use in their school districts for more than three years.

Central to this discussion are some well-documented observations from this study. The first has to do with how extensively the materials provided by the adopted programs were used, and the second has to do with how much student time was spent with workbooks associated with the programs.

How extensively (and exclusively) are procedures and materials from an adopted program used in classrooms? We found that during the periods allocated for reading instruction, the adopted basal materials--readers, teachers' guides, charts, workbooks, and other supplements such as practice cards and audio-visual materials--were used almost exclusively. If one is willing to generalize from our sample, it can be said that teachers and students do use the components of a basal program as "a package." It can also be said that during reading periods what the teachers do and say in order to teach reading (the procedures they follow), and what the students use as the medium for the practice of reading (the books, workbooks, and other supplements) derive primarily from the procedures described and the materials provided by the adopted basal program.[1]

How much time do students spend doing workbook tasks? Workbooks were a regular feature of instruction in every classroom we observed. In most classrooms students spent as much or more time with their workbooks as they did with their teachers. I would like to say this another way: Our observations indicate that these students spend as much time reading and writing in their workbooks as they do interacting with their teachers. This is not to say that students spend all of the reading period with either their teachers or their workbooks; they also spend time reading in their readers and occasionally with other materials. Sometimes they are fooling around and aren't doing much of anything.

For what purpose and when the workbooks were used depended upon how reading instruction was organized in the classrooms. Our observations in self-contained classrooms revealed that the teachers typically taught one group of students while other groups of students worked at their desks. Cross-class grouping was used in a number of the classrooms, especially the upper grades. In these rooms one teacher worked with a group of students drawn from one or two more classrooms while in a different room another teacher worked with other children from the same classrooms. (Cross-class grouping permits teachers to work with larger groups of children of similar ability and usually reduces the number of groups a teacher works with each day while at the same time increasing the amount of time a teacher can spend with each group.)

We observed that in each type of classroom organization, workbooks were used for about the same amount of time. It is useful to reflect about why this is so. In self-contained classrooms, workbooks have an obvious management function; that is, the teacher can teach one small group of students with undivided attention and with an untroubled conscience only when the other students are doing something that engages them and when what they are doing is considered a worthwhile activity by the teacher. In cross-class groupings, the observed functions of workbooks were more varied. In most of these classrooms, a teacher taught only one group at a time. Even in the one-group classrooms, work in workbooks was a part of the reading lesson. While the students

did their workbook activities, the teachers did a variety of things--graded papers, helped individual students, and walked around the room. It was evident that these teachers organized their reading periods to include time for students to work in workbooks and did so even though there was no need to provide something for students to do independently.

Implications for Developers of Basal Programs

Three conclusions from our study are of particular relevance to a discussion of workbooks. (a) Teachers follow the procedures that are described in basal program teachers' guides, and they use the workbooks and other supplementary materials that make up the basal program almost exclusively. (It must be added, however, that this does not imply that teachers follow all of the suggested procedures and use all of the available materials, nor that they always do what is suggested the "right way" or with unfailing competence.) We concluded, however, that the basal programs accounted for most of what the teachers and students were doing during reading periods. (b) During reading periods, students often spend as much or more time working in workbooks as being taught by their teachers. (c) Teachers use workbooks because they think they are an important component of the reading program.

The conclusion that the teachers so fully and almost exclusively used the adopted basal programs is relevant to a point frequently raised by the trainers of teachers who oppose or question the use of basal programs. They contend that good teachers are professional people

who do not feel constrained by any one program, but who will develop their own programs, instead. They advise teachers to pick and choose from a variety of commercial programs and, in addition, to create their own "teacher-made" materials. Their argument is that only in that way can a program be developed that will match the needs of a particular group of students as well as the teaching styles of individual teachers.

This notion of what teachers should do is in direct contrast to what we saw teachers doing. The 45 teachers whose classrooms we observed had an average of 12 years of teaching experience; they were all trained and certified and probably had taken many courses from professors who advised a more eclectic mode for the teaching of reading. We do not care to formulate an explanation for why their teaching behavior has been more affected by basal reading programs than by their professors.[2] It should be noted, however, that we saw many good teachers and some excellent teachers, we also saw some inadequate teachers. We saw students who were doing well, but we also saw students who, to use an old-fashioned term, were not "being reached." What was consistent across these classrooms was the presence of those procedures and materials that derived from the adopted basal programs. Although other books were in the classrooms, typically they were on the shelves and not in use, at least not during the reading period. And of particular interest to the discussion of workbooks, although we saw some workbook materials from our sources, we saw few teacher-made workbook-type materials.

That these teachers did not seem to be making major adjustments and alterations in the programs they were using is certainly a reason for developers of programs to be exceedingly thoughtful and careful about the instructional content of their programs. But, even if it could be assumed that teachers always made radical changes in the programs they used, it would still seem essential to the integrity of a basal program that it be as instructionally viable as possible.

We think our classroom observations have impliciations for teachers and for developers of basal programs, and especially for the developers of the workbook components of those programs. If teachers' guides direct what is taught, students' readers provide what is read, and workbooks provide what is practiced, then what is in these materials must have within them a sufficient amount of instructional clout to assure that students can be taught and will learn the content of the program being used.

The Sufficiency, Efficiency, and Effectiveness of Workbook Tasks

Before proceeding to the next section, I would like to make one point very clear. In our classroom study, we documented how time was spent; in this paper I am discussing workbooks. Neither in the study nor in this paper do I comment on or question the basic philosophy

or instructional basis of a program--there are differences among the basal programs. But the amount of time I saw students engaged in workbook activities has lead me to ask some questions about how what is taught in a program appears in its workbook component. The primary questions are about sufficiency, efficiency, and effectiveness. Are there a sufficient number of workbook activities to provide instruction in the content of the program? Are the activities efficient in that they provide for practice that is integral to the content of the program? Are the activities effective in that their use is likely to make a difference to student performance in reading? Workbooks are a part of a delivery system. How well do they support the rest of the system?

Not many reading educators would oppose the notion that workbook tasks be designed so that they are relevant to students and to the program with which they are associated. Relevant and challenging workbook tasks are important for many students, but (and this is another statement based on intuition) they seem critically important to those students for whom learning to read is hard.[3] It is for these children, especially, that teachers turn to the tools for teaching reading that are in their classrooms. For most teachers, the tools consist of materials that are associated with a basal program.

Keeping in mind the children for whom learning to read is hard, I surveyed a number of basal program workbooks. As I did this, I also followed along in the teachers' guides to see what was going on in the rest of a unit or lesson. Some of what I saw seemed inefficient, some insufficient, some seemed needlessly labored, some seemed impossibly difficult, some seemed irrelevant to the instructional plan of the program, a few seemed absolutely hokey--and some seemed clever, fine, and well done. Some of what I saw prompted me to put together a set of "workbook guidelines." In the following section these guidelines will be presented along with examples from workbooks. These examples are "counter-examples"; that is, they show aspects of workbook design that are not exemplary. The counter-examples were chosen to illustrate some of the factors workbook designers may want to consider if their goal is to provide materials that will help students learn to read, and especially those students who need the most sufficient, most efficient, and most effective help in learning to read.

I have not done a complete analysis of all workbooks found at every level of every series; rather, I tracked the tasks in one series for a while, then moved to another, and then picked and chose from still others. I have looked at hundreds of tasks in about 20 books.

My overall impression is that workbooks are the forgotten children of basal programs. Like forgotten children, they have both good points and bad points. A remedy for the bad points of forgotten children is to attend to the details of their existence. Teachers using workbooks with their students should be aware of the "forgotten children" aspects of some of the materials they use in the classroom. The guidelines that follow may be of help in evaluating those materials and in planning how to prepare children to use them.

Some Guidelines for Workbook Tasks

1. A sufficient proportion of workbook tasks should be relevant to the instruction that is going on in the rest of the unit or lesson.

To get some sense of how much of what is taught during a lesson is reflected in what students do in their workbooks, the content of a lesson in one level of a basal series was analyzed and then related to it were the portions of the two workbooks that accompanied that lesson. How the events of the lesson listed in the teachers' manual are represented in the two workbooks is outlined in Example 1.

There are five major events in the lesson (in addition to those events which have to do with the reading of the story and some other optional activities). Aspects of each of those five events appear as workbook tasks. There are nine pages of workbook tasks to be done in conjunction with this lesson.

Example 1

Lesson X

Teacher's Guide	WB 1	WB 2
1. Word recognition 46 words 2. Word meaning 22 words	1) Word meaning tasks with 9 words from Lesson X	5) Word meaning task with 8 words from Lesson X
3. Sequencing of story events (6 events)	2) Sequence task with 2 sets of 5 events (independent story)	6) Sequence task with 6 events (based on Story in X)
4. Phonetic skills introduce /sp/ sp review /ft/ ft	3) Sentence completion task with 13 sp words (1 word from Lesson X)	7) Sentence completion tasks with 6 sp words (3 story words) 8) and 6 ft words (no story words)
5. Locating information on a contents page Optional a) Noting action and conversation as a means of characterization b) Dramatizing good safety habits	4) 1 page task with table of contents	9) 1 page task with table of contents

Forty-six words that at least some of the students using the program are not likely to have seen in print before appear in the story that is read in this lesson. The teacher is directed to write on the board (or have students look up in the glossary) and discuss 22 of these words.

Available for the students to work on in the workbooks are two vocabulary tasks, two sequencing tasks, three phonetic skills tasks, and two information locating tasks. Of the 46 new words that appear in the story, only 21 of these appear as words to be "worked with" in these tasks. Each word appears only once. The question of sufficiency has to be asked: Is the amount of exposure to these vocabulary words sufficient for the hard-to-teach students? Does the practice with 19 sp words provide enough practice so that students will know how to handle that letter combination in future reading?

The sequencing task in Workbook 1 requires that students number two sets of events from 1 to 5, and then from 6 to 10, whereas in Workbook 2 the students sequence 6 events. Two tasks are devoted to working with tables of contents.

All of the tasks in the nine pages I examined were relevant to the rest of the lesson. This was not the case in all of the series I examined.

2. Another portion of workbook tasks should provide for a systematic and cumulative review of what has already been taught.

Workbook tasks are an obvious place for the systematic review of the vocabulary and phonics skills that are taught in the rest of a program. The vocabulary introduced in the lesson just described is not used in various contexts in workbook tasks throughout that level of the program. Only one of the letter combinations taught in that lesson occurs in the next lesson (and also in several lessons beyond that) but other letter combinations introduced in other lessons appear only once or twice or not at all.

A rather crude analysis of the vocabulary and phonics skills taught in a sequence of three lessons reveals that some things are reviewed and some are not (see Examples 2 and 3). In the lesson (Lesson Y) following the lesson just described (Lesson X), 14 words from Lesson X are used in Lesson Y workbook tasks, indicating an attempt to use some of the words once again. However, there were 46 new words presented in Lesson X. In workbook tasks in the next lesson (Lesson Z) none of the Lesson X words appears and only a few words from Lesson Y can be found. The letter combinations taught in Lessons X and Y also have a spotty appearance in the subsequent workbook tasks. In Lesson Y workbook tasks, students practice a new combination (/str/ <u>str</u>) and review one of the combinations (/sp/ <u>sp</u>) from Lesson X. Another combination reviewed in the teacher presentation part of that lesson does not appear in a workbook task. Three combinations are reviewed

Example 2

Lesson Y

Teacher's Guide	WB 1	WB 2
1. Word recognition 10 words 2. Word meaning 22 words	1) Word meaning task with 14 words from Lessons X and Y	4) 10 sentence completion exercises based on story in Y 5) 10 sentence completion exercises with words from Lessons X and Y
3. Inferring story details	2) Inferring details from pictures task (unrelated vocabulary)	6) 10 inferring detail sentences, based on story in Y
4. Phonetic skills introduce /str/ <u>str</u> review /uw/ <u>ew</u> /yuw/ <u>ew</u>	3) Word meaning task with 12 <u>sp</u> and <u>str</u> words	7) Word meaning exercise, 7 <u>str</u> words (3 words from Lesson Y)
5. Locating words in a glossary, using guide words Optional a) Pantomiming story characters b) Noting action and conversation as a means of characterization		8) Page task with guide words 9) Page task with table of contents

Example 3

Lesson Z

Teacher's Guide	WB 1	WB 2
1. Word recognition 38 words	1) puzzle with 8 words from Lesson Z	5) 10 sentence completion exercises with words from Lesson Z
2. Word meaning 18 words		
3. Spanish words		6) Writing 10 Spanish words
4. Predicting outcomes		7) Predicting outcomes of three paragraphs
5. Phonetic skills review /ft/ ft /sp/ sp	2) inferring the main idea (unrelated vocabulary)	8) Review of 12 ft words in sentences
		9) 5 sp words in a sentence completion exercise
6. Reading a map	3) Responding to provacative questions (unrelated vocabulary)	10) Map reading exercise
7. Optional a) Playing the role of a new student in a foreign land b) Plot and character development c) Elaborating story elements	4) Recognizing supporting details (unrelated vocabulary)	

in the teacher presentation part of Lesson Y (/str/ str /uw/ uw /yuw/ ew). Of these, only one (/str/ str) appears in workbook tasks. The ft and sp combinations get two more tasks in Lesson Z.

There are three specific comprehension activities taught in these three lessons: sequencing of story events, inferring story details, and predicting outcomes. The teacher is directed to teach each of these lesson segments as the students follow along in workbook tasks from Workbook 2. What is troublesome is that additional workbook tasks on these topics are cast in a very different form from the initial teaching task. The vocabulary in these additional tasks is usually unrelated to the vocabulary of the lesson. I suspect that for the hard-to-teach student working with a new comprehension concept in such a different context and with such different (and perhaps unmastered) vocabulary is hazardous and often not beneficial.

Why certain vocabulary and letter combinations are selected for more practice than others is not clear. It is clear that there is not an ongoing, systematic, and cumulative review of vocabulary and phonic skills. The assumption seems to be that students will master the content of each page and that that content will be assimilated into general reading skill. I think such an assumption is optimistic. My classroom experience indicates that for hard-to-teach students, lots of monitored practice is required for content to be mastered and

assimilated into general reading skill. I also know that, on the other hand, some students need much less practice. A simple in-workbook testing procedure for determining which students need extra practice on any given task would be really helpful.

3. Workbooks should reflect the most important (and workbook appropriate) aspects of what is being taught in the reading program. Less important aspects should remain in the teacher's guide as voluntary activities.

In each of the lessons just described, the teacher is directed to present several different kinds of activities as well as to conduct the story reading activities. (There are also additional optional activities.) In Lesson X the activities include word recognition, word meaning, sequencing of story events, phonetic skills, locating information on a contents page, and noting action and conversation as a means of characterization. In Lesson Y there are word recognition, word meaning, and phonetic skills activities which are similar in form to the previous lesson but which contain different words and skills. The different activities in this lesson include inferring story details, locating words in a glossary with guide words, and pantomining story characters (as well as noting action and conversation as a means of characterization). In Lesson Z the different activities include predicting outcomes, Spanish words, and reading a map.

Which of these activities is reinforced with workbook tasks, and how sufficient are the tasks in number and in quality? As discussed in the previous guidelines, only some of the phonics skills and new words that are taught in the lessons appear in the workbooks. But what about the other activities? Sequencing story events appears in two workbook tasks, locating information on a contents page in two tasks, practice with guide words in one task. Three of the tasks are about inferring details, one about reading a map and two are extra--one on main idea and one on "provocative questions."

At least some elements of the most important activities of Lessons X, Y, and Z appear as workbook tasks. Careful observations of hard-to-teach students could determine if what is in the workbooks is sufficient. My hunch is that the sequencing of story event tasks are much too difficult and that hard-to-teach students make a lot of mistakes in them. I also suspect that one of the tasks on inferring details requires so much prior knowledge on the part of the reader that students who lack that knowledge have no way of approaching the task. But, in comparison to some of the other programs that I examined, the workbook tasks in this program do reflect the major teaching activities of the lessons.

4. <u>Workbooks should contain, in a form that is readily accessible to students and teachers, extra tasks for students who need extra practice</u>.

There are alternate and supplementary workbooks available with basal series that have been written for students who need extra practice. Frequently, what is on each page is well labeled, and there are several examples of each type of task. My concern is that the tasks that have been created should be especially effective tasks, and not just more of the same, or worse yet, some kind of busy-work activities that might keep the students busy and perhaps even amused, but that have minimal "instruction power."

Example 4 is a supplementary task for students who are having trouble with syllabication. I submit that students who have trouble with syllabication need to spend their time with words, and not cutting and pasting. In addition, these students are not likely to follow the complex set of directions this task requires, nor are they likely to appreciate "another way in which the words of each square are alike." If the realization that a red square of one-syllable words contains only animals and a blue square for three syllables contains words that begin with the syllable <u>be</u> does anything for syllabication, I have not figured out what it is. This is a task that seems neither efficient nor effective.

How much practice should be provided is a problem. In the absence of hard data, I offer several suggestions:

(a) better too much than too little, particularly if there are procedures available (for example, check-out tests) to determine how many of the available tasks students need to do;

21

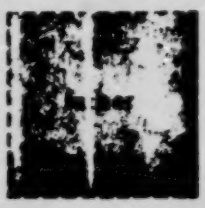
Say the word in each shape. If you hear one syllable, color the shape red. If you hear two syllables, color the shape green. If you hear three syllables, color the shape blue. Then cut out each shape.

Put the red shapes together to make a red square. Put the green shapes together to make a green square, and put the blue shapes together to make a blue square. Make sure the words are not upside down.

The words in each square will have the same number of syllables. See if you can discover another way in which the words of each square are alike.

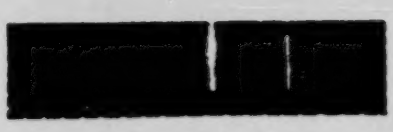
becoming

= red (words that name animals)
= green (words that name people)
= blue (words that begin with the common syllable *be*)



belonging

beginning



SL 21; TU 14; D 113g

(b) better more on what is known (from classroom observation) to be difficult, and less on easier aspects of reading;

(c) better for workbook designers to go into classrooms and watch hard-to-teach children to get a sense of what aspects of reading need the most practice.

5. The vocabulary and concept level of workbook tasks should relate to that of the rest of the program and to the students using the program.

The task in Example 5 is from a primary-level book. First of all, this task is difficult for a hard-to-teach child. It assumes prior knowledge of the distinction between words and phrases--the directions say words but may mean phrases; it is not clear. It also assumes this child can pick from a rather confusing, unpunctuated array of phrases those words or phrases which reflect the concepts mystery, hostile, peaceful, confusion.

For a hard-to-teach child the content of this task is neither sufficient nor effective. In order to do this task, this child would have to be taught how to do it. (The teaching would surely include showing him how to separate the lines by some sort of punctuation.) The task form would have to be available many times and on successive days (it appears only once in the entire workbook), and the vocabulary used in each example should not only be used in those examples but in other parts of the reading lesson as well. For students who can figure

Story Vibrations

Follow the directions given below

Underline words that would give a feeling of mystery to a story.

dark, shadowy figures in the night
eyes peeking from behind a curtain
a bright yellow sports car
a dark underground passageway
boats rocking lazily in the harbor
strange creaking sounds at night
sun shining through the window
an unusual steady tapping
a robin perched on a branch
strange footprints in a flower bed

Underline words that would show a hostile feeling in a story.

a playful, young brown bear
eyes blazing with anger
a faithful friendship
stamping their feet and shouting
children wrestling on a mat for fun
a scowling frown
children laughing at a funny joke
cheerfully chasing the cat
slamming the door in his face
yelling angrily

Underline words that would give a peaceful feeling to a story.

a noisy birthday party
soft music playing
fluffy white clouds floating along
bands marching in a parade
soft snow falling silently
a crowded subway in New York
sun slipping behind the mountains
people cheering at a baseball game
a whispering brook
moonlight on a quiet lake

Underline words that would show a feeling of confusion in a story.

lost in a busy downtown store
a smile of delight
hustle and bustle of a busy station
whistling a merry tune
a cat sleeping in a basket
alarms blasting and people hurrying
watching a sunrise
a bag tearing and apples rolling
a peaceful ride in the country
six telephones ringing at once

out how to do the task and who know the meaning of these descriptive words, this task would provide independent work that will help them reflect on the meaning of language.

6. The language used in workbook tasks must be consistent with that used in the rest of the lesson and in the rest of the workbook.

The directions in the teacher's guide for Example 6 have the teacher teach the students about word syllables; in the workbook tasks the students are told to identify the word parts. The directions in the teacher's guide for another lesson (Example 7) have the teacher teach the students the differences between fiction (which they also describe as "make-believe") and nonfiction. In the workbooks the students must decide if paragraphs are real or not real.

Whether such changes are due to lack of coordination between teacher's guide writers and workbook writers, or are done to adapt to the constraints of readability, or for some other reasons, such workbook tasks represent some inconsistent--and therefore ineffective and inefficient--instruction for hard-to-teach students.

Consistency of language from the rest of the lesson to the workbook is critical, as is consistency from task to task within a workbook.

Parts of two tasks from adjacent pages are pasted together in Example 8. The direction in the first says that students are to circle the word "above" each sentence, whereas in the very next text, they are to circle each word. A small difference, but one that causes some confusion to the easily confused student.

How Many Word Parts?

Follow the directions given below.

Say each word to yourself. Write the number of parts you hear beside it.

bicycle	____	whistle	____	apple	____
table	____	expert	____	jingle	____
exchange	____	invisible	____	exercise	____
flexible	____	extra	____	needle	____
uncle	____	handle	____	bustle	____
bottle	____	excited	____	people	____
candle	____	jiggle	____	excuse	____
exactly	____	kettle	____	gurgle	____
bundle	____	bubble	____	nibbled	____
circle	____	little	____	cattle	____
giggle	____	exclaimed	____	handed	____
explore	____	middle	____	explain	____
hustle	____	mumbled	____	turtle	____

2

The Real Thing?

Read each story. Then decide if the story is real or make-believe. If the story is real, write real on the line. If the story is make-believe, write not real.

1. Della made a paper airplane. She put it outside on her front porch. Suddenly there was a big gust of wind. It lifted the airplane high into the air. Della ran after the plane and tried to catch it. It flew over a tree and around the house. It landed on her front porch.

real

2. Don wanted to grow some flowers. He found a big, empty box. He filled it with dirt. Then he put some seeds in the dirt. When the dirt was dry, he watered it. Soon the seeds grew into tiny plants. Then the plants got bigger and bigger. At last they were flowers!

real

3. Oscar's socks wanted to play a joke on him. They ran around the drawer and mixed themselves all up. When Oscar reached inside the drawer, he got two different socks. But the joke was on the socks. They had forgotten one little thing. They were all the same color!

not real

4. Lisa found an old coin in the garden. She took it inside to clean it. Suddenly there was a puff of smoke. A voice said, "I am the magic genie. I will give you your wish."

   Lisa wanted to make a special wish. Finally she wished for a new bike.

not real

Example 8

Circle the word above each sentence that completes the sentence.

1. Bob got a **pump cramp damp** _____ in his leg while swimming.

2. The puppy began to **bumper hamper whimper** _____ when it was left alone.

3. The car went slowly down the **bump ramp jump** _____.

4. Ann put the dirty shirts in a **bumper plumper hamper** _____.

Circle the word that completes each sentence.

1. The kitten has **silkier sillier** _____ fur than the cat.

2. After planting the seeds, my hands were **dirtier drier** _____ than Tom's hands.

3. The weather seems **crunchier chillier** _____ today than it was on Monday.

4. This wool jacket is **scratchier scrawnier** _____ than that one.

5. The TV picture is **fluffier fuzzier** _____ now than it was last Thursday.

Consistency is also important within tasks. The initial instruction in Example 9, which seems clear, tells the student to read and find the main idea of each paragraph. The second instruction says to number the sentence that gives the main idea for each part. There are eight sentences and four paragraphs (or parts). Suppose I am a hard-to-teach student who has some arithmetic skill. Does this mean every paragraph has two parts? Am I supposed to use up all those sentences? Does it mean that I'm supposed to find two main ideas for each paragraph? Maybe those sentences with lines in front of them are parts. For the easy-to-teach student, such ambiguity is simply a problem to solve; for other students, such ambiguity may result in confusion about some barely set understandings. The inefficiency of such a task seems evident.

7. Instructions to students should be clear, unambiguous, and easy to follow; brevity is a virtue.

The language used in instructions is the topic of some work that is planned for next year at the Center for the Study of Reading. Perhaps this kind of research will tell us more about characteristics of effective instructions. Meanwhile, the comments on examples presented here are based on the performance of students in classrooms, and on my intuition. I would like to begin by saying something based on classroom observation. Students often do not read instructions, but simply go ahead and do the tasks. When easy-to-teach students decide to read

Moving West

Read the paragraphs. Then skim the sentences to find the main idea of each paragraph.

1

Some of the first people to move west had to walk. The trails over mountains and through forests were often very narrow. These people took pack animals loaded with the things they needed most.

2

Later, as trails became wider, covered wagons pulled by oxen carried families and the things they would need in their new homes. People were able to take along household goods, supplies, and tools.

3

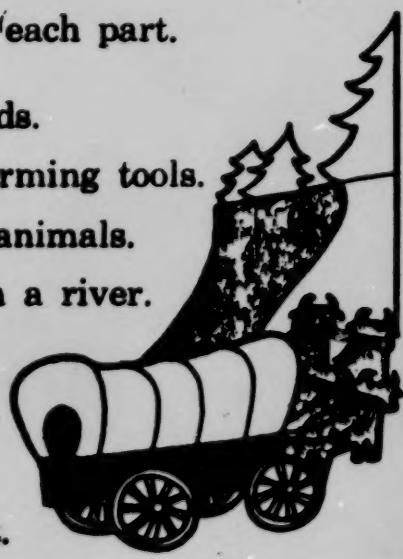
Many families made at least part of their trip to the West on the Ohio River or on other rivers in that part of the country. They put all their goods on flatboats and floated downstream.

4

It was often difficult for wagon trains to cross rivers, though some wagons could be floated. There were strong currents, and even getting to the water might be hard because of steep banks or quicksand.

Number the sentence that gives the main idea for each part.

____ Covered wagons carried people and their goods.
____ Pack animals carried household goods and farming tools.
____ Some early travelers walked and used pack animals.
____ One way of traveling west was to float down a river.
____ Covered wagons could travel on wider trails.
____ Quicksand made crossing of rivers difficult.
____ Crossing rivers was difficult and dangerous.
____ The Ohio River was on the way to the West.



instructions, they are usually able to follow them, even if the instructions are confusing, ambiguous, or unclear. My hypothesis is that these students regard such instructions as a problem-solving activity. They solve the problem and then proceed with the task. In contrast, when hard-to-teach students are confronted by confusing, ambiguous, or unclear instructions, their inability to follow them only confounds their tenuous ability to perform the tasks. Clear and unambiguous instructions are likely to make a difference for such students.

Instructions accompany most workbook tasks. Intuitively, it seems that brevity is a virtue and verbosity is less than virtuous. Thus, "Read the sentences below. Fill in each blank." seems easier to follow than "Read the first sentence in box 1. Use the words letters stand for and the sense of the other words to find out what the new word in heavy black print is. Find the word that makes sense in the second sentence and print it where it belongs. Then do what the last sentence tells you to do. Do the other boxes the same way" (Example 10).

The goals of this instruction include a praiseworthy effort to coordinate what the teacher is directed by the program's teacher's manual to say about reading in the rest of the lesson, with what the students do when they are working independently. Thus, "Use the words letters stand for and the sense of the other words to find out what the new word in heavy black print is. Find the word that makes sense . . ." are words that represent how reading is being taught in this program.

Read the first sentence in box 1. Use the sounds letters stand for and the sense of the other words to find out what the new word in heavy black print is. Find the word that makes sense in the second sentence and print it where it belongs. Then do what the last sentence tells you to do. Do the other boxes the same way.

1. The girl **dashed** along the beach.

To **dash** means to race.

wet brighten race

Put an **S** on the one who is **dashing**.

2. **Mash** up the carrots for the baby.

Mashed carrots are soft.

uncut soft loud

Put an **A** on the **mashed** carrots.

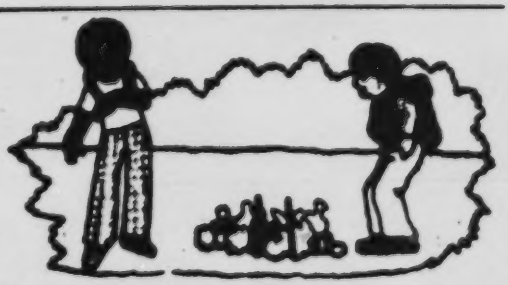
3. We put the **cash** in here.

Cash is money.

cakes noise money

Put an **S** on the one with **cash**.

4. Where did this **trash** come from?



I'll need a basket for the **trash**.

basket doctor dress

Put an **H** on the **trash**.

But, the question that has to be asked is, does language in such "long form" function in a direction-giving mode? The 'middle-sized" form of this instruction would be "Read the words and use the context of the sentence," the short form would be "Read the sentence." I suspect most students, even our hard-to-teach students, eventually use the short form and skip such an instruction.

In addition to being a counter-example to the guideline of brevity rather than verbosity and an example of an instruction that is not efficient, this instruction illustrates several additional points that relate to the use of instructional language.

(a) Instructional language must be unambiguous. The easy-to-teach child who reads this instruction will figure out that the horizontal rules indicate the space that the instructions are referring to as "boxes" and then understand that in each box the first sentence is followed by the second sentence, and that by the last one. But consider the student who does not make the translation from horizontal rules to boxes and who is used to the numeral 1 being associated with first and the numeral 2 being associated with second. The instructions may be very confusing for that child. (This would be especially so if the child does not bother to read the instructions all the way through and does not see the last line "Do all the other boxes the same way." That line does give some help with how to do the task.)

In this task, the use of the words box, first, second, and last is not clear and, for some students, is likely to be ambiguous and therefore inefficient.

(b) Critical elements of the instructions should be emphasized. Even for children who can perform this task without reading the instructions, there is one response criterion that cannot be reliably figured out by looking at the print and at the pictures. Whether the correct word is to be circled or printed in the blank has to be determined by reading the instructions. (If the students do not look for the words that tell how to respond, and circle right answers, they stand in danger of being told by their teacher they just do not know how to follow instructions and that every answer is wrong even if all of the correct words have been circled.) Easy-to-teach children learn how to search out what they need to know so that their teachers will write "Good work," "Fantastic!" on their work sheets; hard-to-teach children do not learn such skills so readily. (Please note that I am not saying such instructional reading strategies are undesirable--in fact, I believe students who do not figure them out should be taught them, but not when the goal of the task is the teaching of something else.)

(c) Instructions should become less complex as students do repeated examples of the same type of task. Many of the tasks in this series

(from the beginning of this workbook to the end) include this "long form" of the instruction "read"; there does not seem to be an acknowledgment of the notion that as students become experienced, the length and elaborateness of instructions can (and should) be diminished. I noticed this in many workbooks of many series, and I suggest that the continuing use of "long forms" encourages students not to read instructions. For hard-to-teach students, not reading instructions is an especially hazardous workbook strategy. One series started every instruction (in two levels of the series) with the words "you should understand." I suggest this teaches all students not to read the first words of the first sentence of any instructions.

(d) Components of instructions that appear frequently should be taught so that students will understand a "short form" of those components. This program uses boldface type in many of its tasks to identify words students will do something with. Wouldn't it be more efficient to teach the meaning of boldface type than to continuously require the students to process "the word (or words) in heavy black print"?

(e) Tasks should be designed so that "punch lines" are obvious. In this task, students who have correctly followed the third line of each box have made a word by writing letters on the pictures. The task would be improved by providing a line on which they write those letters and indicate a picture of the word they have written.

Lest you think I am picking on this one task because I could find no other instances of problems with instructions in workbook tasks, let's move on to some other examples of ambiguity in instructions. In Example 11 first implies two sentences that are next to a picture, and last implies a sentence with a blank that is under the picture, but, why is it on top of the second picture? Does the second picture have a first sentence? What is a hard-to-teach student to do with such ambiguous instruction? "Put some sew on the fire" has probably been turned in to many teachers.

Another task with ambiguous instructions is shown in Example 12. The instructions in Part A seem reasonably clear, if the students are comfortable with the notion that a word can "name a picture" and if they can cope with the concept of before. The trouble comes with Part B; first of all, it's hidden at the bottom of the page. Will it be seen and done? Next, the students have already underlined the vowel letter that comes before the consonants; now they are supposed to underline the first vowel letter in each word. To an unsure child, this second instruction might imply that there is supposed to be a line in some other part of the word. The instructional assumptions of the final line will be mentioned here; they are considerable and have to do with the sufficiency of examples, singular and plural confusions, and the basic nature of the response demands of the rest of the task (knowledge of vowels and consonants) as compared to the response demanded by this part (oral discrimination).

Words That Sound Alike

Two of the words in the first sentences sound alike.
Underline the sentence that tells about the picture.
Then write the missing word in the last sentence.

He **would** do that!

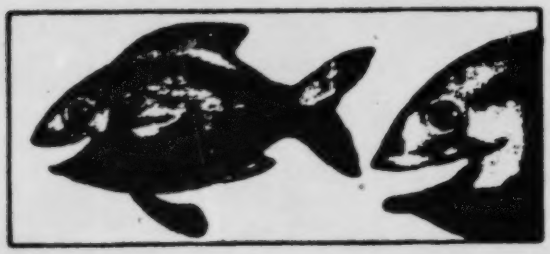
The bench is made of **wood**.

Put some _____ on the fire.

I am **so** late!

Please **sew** my pocket.

Your plants are _____ big.



They like to swim in the **sea**.

They **see** the cave.

Can you take your boat out to _____ ?

Double Consonant Letters

A. Read the word that names each picture.
Circle the double consonant letters.
Underline the vowel letter before them.

s a d d l e

d o l l a r

d r u m m e r

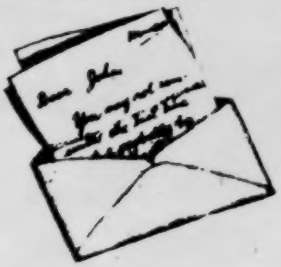
r u n n i n g

a p p l e

c h e r r y

b u t t o n

t a s s e l



l e t t e r

B. Underline the first vowel letter in each word.
It stands for a (short) (long) vowel sound.

Successful performance on the task in Example 13 assumes that students understand the instructional concepts first, above, and below. (There is very little teaching of the language used to express instructional concepts in the workbooks. The few attempts I saw were at best inadequate, at worst ludicrous.) But even granted an understanding of how these words are used in printed instructions, I would like to point out a problem for our hard-to-teach students. Part C implies that words from Part B will be used to fill those blanks with king, sing, and wing, and maybe ring. The easy-to-teach child will see through the small fallacy in the Part C directions and go to the list of words in Part A. More careful instructions would make it more likely that hard-to-teach children would go to the right list.

I will now list several more points about instructional language.

(f) When possible, avoid the use of negation in instructions (see Example 14). Instructions which require students to process words indicating negation are more difficult than those written without such words. Thus, "Write the word with the oi or oy sound" would be better than "Write the word that does not have a long vowel sound."

By the same token, "Circle the word in each row that has a short vowel sound" is much easier than "Circle the word in each row that does not have a long vowel sound." The content of tasks of this sort require the students to make difficult discriminations. Our hard-to-teach students need to have instructions as clear as possible so that they

Sound Search

A. Circle the letters that stand for the first sound you hear in *chair*. Underline the letters that stand for the first sound you hear in *ship*.

king	wash	chipmunk	lunch
shoes	sing	shopping	chin
such	shut	wing	crash

B. Write the words from above that rhyme with *ring*.

_____

C. Use the words above in the sentences below.

1. We have _____ at noon.
2. _____ the door quietly.
3. Can you _____ that song?
4. There is a _____ in our front yard.
5. We found a bird's _____ on the road.
6. Did you see that auto _____ in the street?
7. The _____ and queen live in the castle.
8. Don't forget to shine your _____.
9. We had a good time _____ for clothes.
10. Who will _____ the dishes?

Vowel Sounds

Read each sentence. Look at the words in dark print. Write the word that does not have a long vowel sound on the line.

1. The **boy** is in the **boat.** boy

2. If you press too hard with the pencil, the **point** will **break.** point

3. I hope you **enjoy** your **day** at the zoo. enjoy

4. If I had my **choice,** I'd pick the **green** one. choice

5. **Please** remind me to buy **foil** at the store. foil

6. Debbie planted the **seeds** in the **soil.** soil

do not have a difficult language processing task as well as a difficult content task.

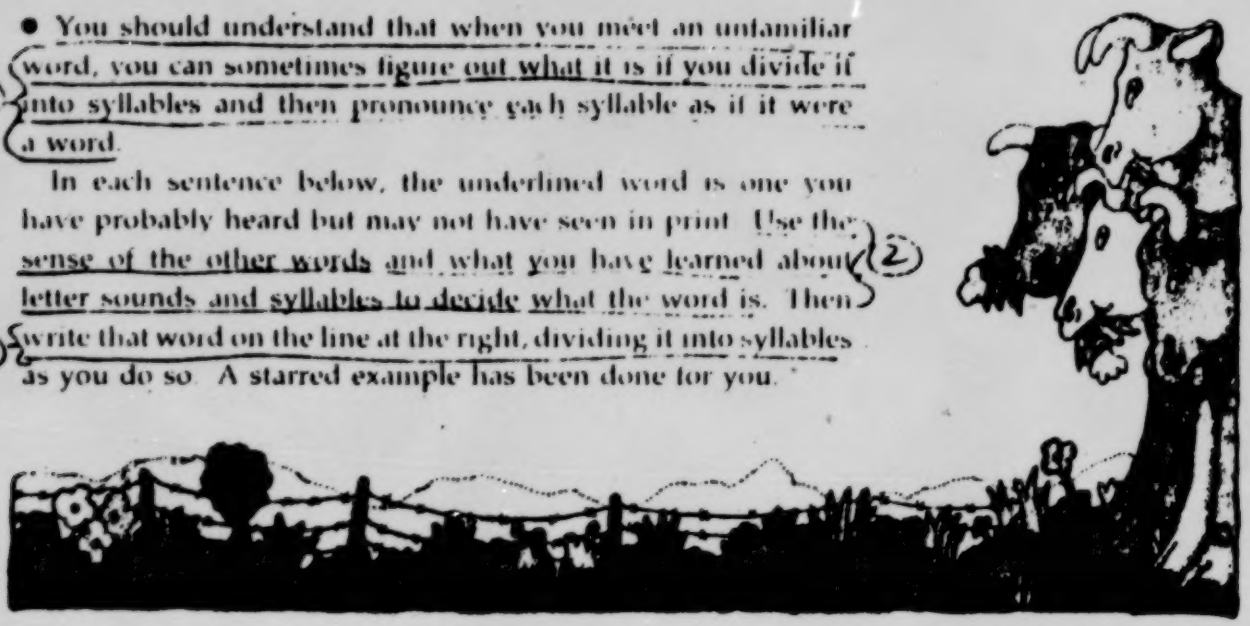
(g) Avoid instructions that are too ambitious. Many instructions are too ambitious in that they attempt to combine goal setting, explanation, and instruction. Such a reasonable sounding practice often makes instructions long and cumbersome. The instruction in Example 15 includes: (a) goal setting, "You should understand . . . ; (b) explanation, "Use the sense of the other words and what you have learned about letter sounds and syllables to decide what the word is"; and (c) instruction, "Write that word on the line at the right, dividing it into syllables." The content of this task is very difficult for many students because it requires the knowledge of several syllabication rules. Does the incorporation of goals, explanation, and instruction in the instructions affect student ability to divide the underlined words into syllables? The best way to get answers to this question is by working with students, and especially with hard-to-teach students. My hunch is that the goal setting is a good idea, the explanation is not sufficient, and the instructions are too embedded in everything else.

(h) Instructions should contain sufficient information. Although I found a lot of examples of too many words in instructions, here is an example of insufficient information (Example16). The instruction asks that the word with the same sound as the word that names the picture

Using Syllables to Help Decode Words

• You should understand that when you meet an unfamiliar word, you can sometimes figure out what it is if you divide it into syllables and then pronounce each syllable as if it were a word. (1)

In each sentence below, the underlined word is one you have probably heard but may not have seen in print. Use the sense of the other words and what you have learned about letter sounds and syllables to decide what the word is. Then write that word on the line at the right, dividing it into syllables as you do so. A starred example has been done for you. (2) (3)



★ Industrial waste is an environmental crisis. *cri* *sis*

1. The archer hit the target with her first arrow.
2. The speed limit on most highways is fifty-five miles per hour.
3. She has good credit at all stores.
4. Automobile fumes can pollute the air.
5. What is Steve's favorite flavor of ice cream?
6. A carelessly tossed match can be a real fire hazard.
7. Suzanne burned her hand, and a blister developed.
8. My tennis racket needs to be restrung.
9. Since the meeting will begin on time, do not be tardy.
10. People should figure their income tax by April 15.
11. Most newspapers contain comic strips.
12. Each year people are asked to donate to the United Fund.
13. Mr. Grouch is known to have a nasty temper.
14. She wore a black velvet cloak over her gown.
15. Eddie has a habit of cracking his chewing gum.
16. Please get away from my desk, and do not meddle with my papers any more.
17. A country's major city is usually its capital city.
18. A group of cows grazed peacefully in a large field of clover.

Me or My?

Underline the word that has the same sound as the word that names the picture.

1. <u>be</u> sky plant

2. box <u>go</u> me

3. bed my <u>she</u>

4. hat <u>so</u> we

5. <u>cry</u> rip crow

6. <u>he</u> pet shop

7. <u>dry</u> pick do

be underlined. It is obvious that the student must match the vowel sound of each picture word. But, is it obvious to the hard-to-teach student?

I will conclude this section on instructional language by stating the obvious: The problems associated with writing adequate instructions are numerous. In the absence of firm rules and procedures about instruction writing, it would seem important for developers of workbooks to spend more time in classrooms observing children as they read instructions, and questioning them about their interpretations of instructions. These consumer research efforts should contribute to the creation of instructions that will permit more students to understand the demands of their workbook tasks.

I would like to make one additional point: Some of the instructions are fine. All of the programs I looked at have instances of clear instructions. I do not want to give the impression that every instruction in every workbook needs a major overhaul.

The first 7 guidelines have been discussed in a rather lengthy manner. The next 13 will not be discussed as fully though, not because they are less important or because they are unworthy of a more thorough examination. The 20 guidelines are not listed in order of importance, although I would select several as most important. Of the first 7 guidelines, the most important include those about the relevance of workbook

tasks to the rest of the program, coordination of vocabulary and concept level to the rest of the program, and importance of instructional language. From the next 13, I would select the topics of instructional design and appropriateness of art as most important.

8. The layout of pages should combine attractiveness with utility.

I suspect that reading long lines of type which stretch all the way across a page is more difficult than reading shorter lines; certainly shorter lines look less onerous. There may be a reason that the type in newspapers and magazines is in columns rather than across entire pages.

Ruled lines dividing sections of tasks are usually disapproved of by layout designers, but instructionally they often make sense. In addition, many workbook tasks would become much easier to work if the sections were labeled. Example 17a is a page from a workbook. The addition of rules and labels in 17b does seem to clarify the content and make the instructions easier to follow.

9. Workbook tasks should contain enough content so that there is a chance a student doing the task will learn something and not simply be exposed to something.

Teaching, rather than exposing, has to do with both the nature of the task and the number of times similar tasks appear in a given workbook. In Example 18, the difficulties of following the first

Word Parts

Follow the directions given below.

Draw a line between the parts of each word. Then write the number or numbers of the rule you used.

1. between double consonant letters
2. between unlike consonant letters
3. between a vowel letter and a consonant letter
4. between two vowel letters

~~a~~ttle	1	circle		holly	
~~o~~d~~o~~p	3, 4	hammer		museum	
vinter		usual		orbit	
vidow		duty		cider	
astle		poem		after	
ister		wander		summer	
adio		cabin		quiet	
vater		dizzy		accuse	
elly		idea		lumber	
umbo		paper		bonnet	
enny		cruel		lady	
uel		coffee		giant	

Word Parts

Follow the directions given below.

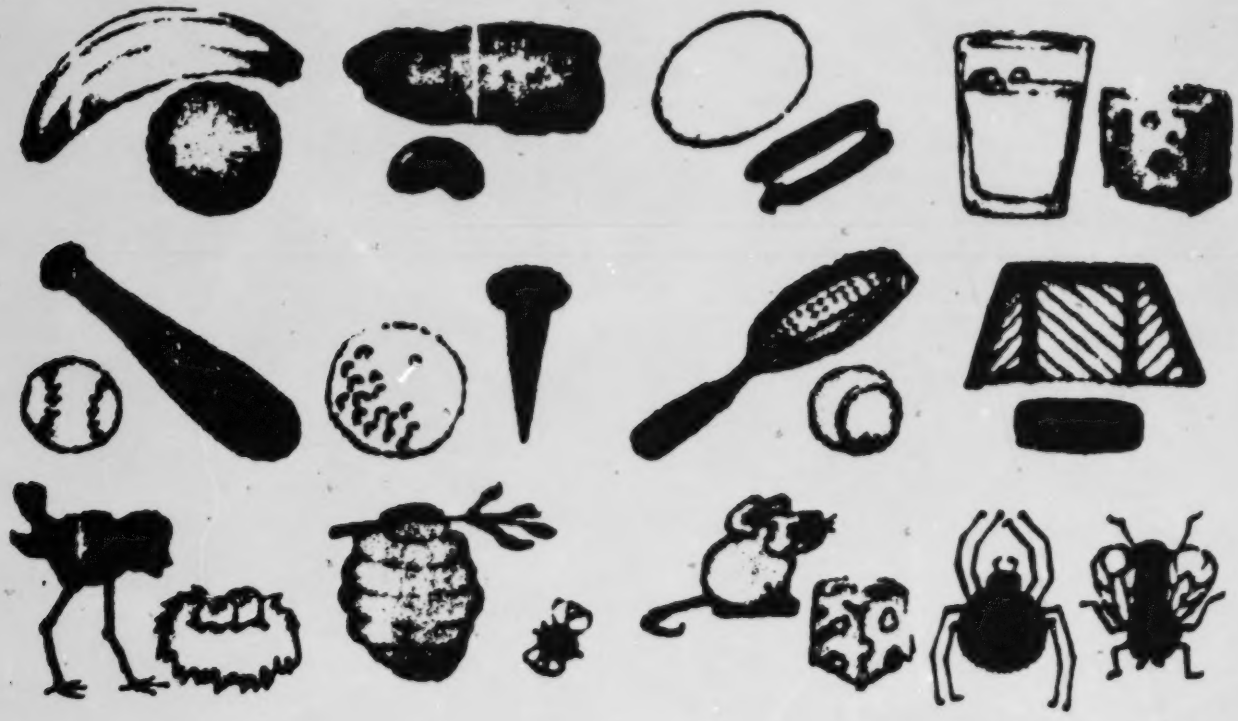
Draw a line between the parts of each word. Then write the number or numbers of the rule you used.

Rules

1. between double consonant letters
2. between unlike consonant letters
3. between a vowel letter and a consonant letter
4. between two vowel letters

Words	Numbers	Words	Numbers	Words	Numbers
rattle	1	circle		holly	
rodeo	3, 4	hammer		museum	
winter		usual		orbit	
widow		duty		cider	
castle		poem		after	
sister		wander		summer	
radio		cabin		quiet	
water		dizzy		accuse	
jelly		idea		lumber	
jumbo		paper		bonnet	
penny		cruel		lady	
fuel		coffee		giant	

In each group of pictures below, circle the pair of things that are related to each other in the same way as the first pair.



Complete each of the following sentences by underlining the word that best fits in the blank.

1. *Hay* is to *horse* as *gas* is to _____. telephone tractor light
2. *Girl* is to *woman* as *boy* is to _____. father girl man
3. _____ is to *sight* as *nose* is to *smell*. Eye Ear Foot
4. *True* is to *false* as *in* is to _____. down out side
5. *Children* are to *parents* as _____ are to *bears*. ponies cubs kittens
6. *Drops* are to _____ as *flakes* are to *snow*. rain dust hail
7. *Wheel* is to *car* as *runner* is to _____. sled train wagon

instruction will not be discussed here, other than to say that for some students what represents a group is probably no more bewildering than what is meant by "the same way." I believe the first part of the task is conceived as a sort of warmup for the second part. The instruction is clear enough, but the task itself assumes the students are able, without previous instruction, to operate with seven different analogy rules. If they cannot do this page, they will never get another chance--at least not in this level of the series.

Another task that only exposes is shown in Example 19. For children who have trouble identifying words that indicate when, where, and how this task is difficult and probably important. Such a task appears only once in this workbook. The hard-to-teach child is only being exposed to something that is worthy of being taught.

Example 20 is primarily a language task. For students who understand part-whole relationships and have a vocabulary that includes a lot of knowledge of the world, this task is nice enough. For students who are unsteady about what is a whole and what is a part, and whose vocabulary does not include such words as cells, lining, and henhouse, this task presents lots of problems. But because this type of task appears only once in the entire workbook, I suspect that a hard-to-teach child will not be much affected by it. If this child gets a lot of teacher help and does the task well, then more examples of the task

In each sentence the part that is underlined tells **when** or **where** or **how.**

Read each sentence. After the sentence you will see three words. Make a line under the one word that shows what the underlined words of the sentence tell. The first one is done for you.

1. We saw a funny clown at the circus.	When	Where	How
2. Our cat likes to stay out at night.	When	Where	How
3. The rain came softly.	When	Where	How
4. The kitten is behind the door.	When	Where	How
5. He ran as fast as he could.	When	Where	How
6. Some bushes are growing near the house.	When	Where	How
7. I'll be there in a minute.	When	Where	How
8. He eats a few cookies every day.	When	Where	How
9. He seemed to feel better after lunch.	When	Where	How
10. Put the cards near the telephone.	When	Where	How
11. After school, he watched TV.	When	Where	How
12. He is waiting at the corner.	When	Where	How
13. She answered us with a smile.	When	Where	How
14. Next week she will visit us.	When	Where	How
15. He carried the eggs carefully.	When	Where	How
16. She has never come to visit.	When	Where	How
17. She asked nicely if I was feeling better.	When	Where	How

Four things are named in each row. Three of the things named are parts of the other thing. Put a ring around the thing that the others are part of in each row. The first one has been done for you.

1. tail	(airplane)	cabin	wings
2. floor	walls	corners	room
3. barn	henhouse	hayloft	farm
4. motor	wheels	bus	seats
5. coat	buttons	lining	cloth
6. sandwich	lunch	milk	grapes
7. swings	slide	playground	sandbox
8. cells	bones	body	blood
9. cover	words	book	pages
10. plant	leaf	root	stem

are in order. If our child does not get help and does poorly on the task, then it is just one more bewildering workbook page.

None of these tasks, which expose rather than teach, is in any way sufficient.

10. Tasks that require students to make discriminations must be preceded by a sufficient number of tasks that provide practice on the components of the discrimination.

For example, tasks in which students must decide in which words y must be changed to i to make plurals, or must determine which expressions are metaphors and which are similes, require them to make discriminations. Only after hard-to-teach students have practiced and mastered component tasks do they have a good chance of successfully coping with tasks that require them to apply this kind of knowledge to complex situations. More careful observation of students working with complex tasks would give workbook developers a better sense of how much component task practice should precede those kinds of tasks.

11. The content of workbook tasks must be accurate and precise; workbook tasks must not present wrong information nor perpetuate misrules.

Phonics, word analysis, and comprehension tasks should be looked at with a cold and critical eye to make sure students are not taught, for example, that the sound of o in hope is short, or that "the main idea is the first sentence of a paragraph."

Some tasks such as the one in Example 21, can seriously promote wrong ideas. This is a task in which the students are supposed to underline the sentences that are not important (an instruction that in itself is bound to cause difficulty for some students). The underlining in this example is from the answer book. I do not see how a student or a teacher (except by using the answer book) is going to determine that the description of a bobcat is not important, whereas where a bobcat lives is important. Such arbitrariness in a task is bound to confuse children. Even if the task were taught by a teacher who was able to justify the choices of importance designated by the workbook writer, it seems unlikely there could be much transfer to other tasks. The task is an example of an ineffective, inefficient task that furthermore seems just plain wrong. It is a vehicle for teaching a misrule about what is important in a paragraph.

12. At least some workbook tasks should be fun and have an obvious payoff to them.

This guideline does not ask that all tasks be fun and games, but occasional puzzles, word games, cartoons, and other gamelike tasks would relieve the page-after-page seriousness of many of the workbooks I looked at. Caution: I am suggesting instructionally effective tasks that are fun, not pointless tasks that are fun.

13. Most student response modes should be consistent from task to task.

Exercise 17: Omitting unimportant incidents and details

Read the story. Make a line under each sentence that is not important. The sentences that you do not underline should tell the important facts about bobcats.

Bobcats

Bobcats belong to the cat family. They live in North America. A bobcat has two ears, eyes, a small body, and four legs. It is about the size of a small child and weighs less than a truck. Most bobcats weigh between twelve and thirty pounds. His coat may be almost any color at all. It may be light or it may be dark. If the bobcat lives in a dry place, his coat is light in color. If the bobcat lives where there is heavy rainfall, his coat is dark. They do not often live in a big city. Most bobcats live in wooded places, far from people. They hunt at night. They do not eat cat food. Bobcats eat rabbits, ground squirrels, mice, and some birds. A mother bobcat takes care of her babies until they are big enough to take care of themselves. There may be from two to four babies living with the mother bobcat at one time.

Read the instructions with the children. Ask them to complete the exercise independently.

For example, if x is used to indicate something is wrong, don't have students use x to indicate that something is right in the next task. These are instructions from two tasks in the same workbook:

1. Circle the word that completes each sentence. Put an X on the word you do not need.
2. Mark an X before the sentence that give details of the story. You will mark six sentences.

The dual role of x probably makes these tasks more confusing for a hard-to-teach student.

14. Student response modes should be the closest possible to reading and writing.

Except for first-level workbooks, used by students who have not developed writing skill, it would seem desirable to provide for student response modes that call for more writing rather than less writing (see Example 22). The writing of the letter or number that stands for a word is much less likely to produce a meaningful sentence, phrase, or word pair than the writing of the word itself.

Often, more writing would make tasks more instructional (see Example 23). This task would be more useful if the students had to write the ending to a given base word and then use the base word in another sentence right under the first sentence.

If there is a purpose for finding the main idea in real-life reading, it is to pick what is important in what has just been read. Underlining

Write the letter for the word that belongs in each blank.

a. buttons	d. Scat	h. hopscotch
b. wrong	e. scraps	i. soap
c. caught	f. scrawny	j. angry
	g. pouring	

1. What is b with your old bicycle?

2. She was j at him for teasing her.

3. Judy washed her hands with i.

4. My dog likes to eat e from his dish.

5. The girl found a tan, _____ cat.

6. Judy's brother was _____ milk for her pet.

7. She _____ the beach ball with both hands.

8. Grandma put three new _____ on her coat.

9. The children were playing _____ on the playground.

10. To chase the cat away, the man shouted "_____!"

Some Things Change

Write the root word of the words in dark print on the lines below.

1. Bella is not the **biggest** frog in the pond.
2. Many frogs are much **larger** than she is.
3. Bella is not the **prettiest** frog either.
4. But **Bella's** stories are wonderful.
5. All the frogs come **hopping** from miles around just to hear stories.
6. Bella makes you feel **happier** just listening to her.
7. Raymond has **loved** Bella for years.
8. He will never stop **loving** Bella.
9. It is not because she is the best **swimmer** in the pond. It is because Bella makes Raymond feel proud to be a frog.

1. big
2. large
3. pretty
4. Bella
5. hop
6. happy
7. love
8. love
9. swim

a main idea sentence in a paragraph is more like real life than finding it in a multiple choice item below a paragraph. Requiring students to write out the implied main idea of a paragraph would be more useful than having them select one best sentence from three different sentences (see Example 24).

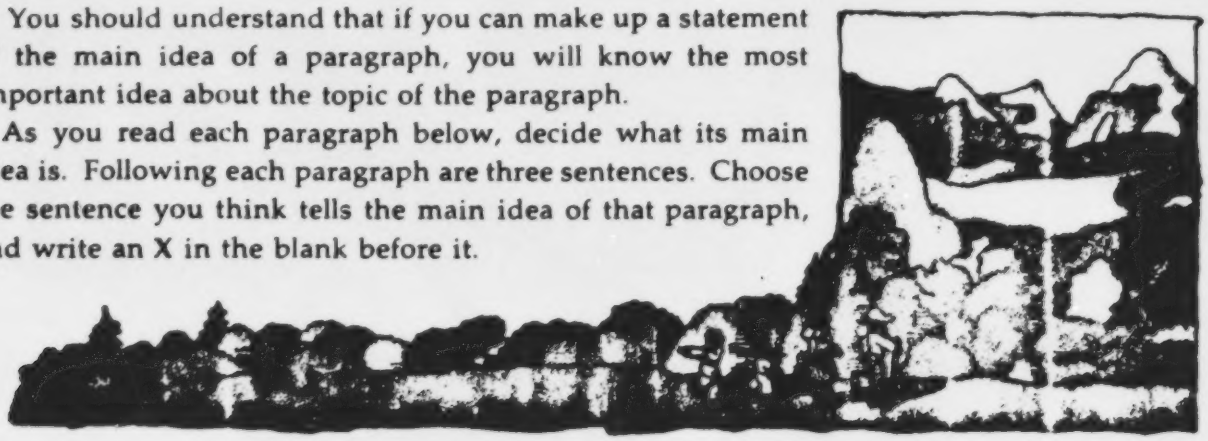
15. The instructional design of individual tasks and of task sequences should be carefully planned.

The design of tasks and task sequences is the topic for a book. A well-designed task is one that will make the performance requirements of the task clear, will cause the student to attend to those elements of the task that are central to what the task is attempting to teach, and will permit the student to move without hazard through the task from beginning to end. Well designed tasks are often part of a sequence of tasks that are connected, in some way. The performance requirements of task design were discussed in the section on instructional language. In this section a few examples of less than adequate instructional design will be given.

In the task presented in Example 25, students are supposed to determine the appropriate use of homographs by matching one of two sentences with a picture. In the first pair of sentences the student only has to read as far as flowers to get the correct answer. The

• You should understand that if you can make up a statement of the main idea of a paragraph, you will know the most important idea about the topic of the paragraph.

As you read each paragraph below, decide what its main idea is. Following each paragraph are three sentences. Choose the sentence you think tells the main idea of that paragraph, and write an X in the blank before it.



1. Glacier National Park in northwestern Montana has numerous attractions for many summer visitors. Those who enjoy scrambling over steep cliffs can climb high mountains and explore deep canyons. Hundreds of well-stocked lakes and streams delight and reward those who like to fish. The park abounds in interesting wildlife, but no hunting is allowed. There are miles of wilderness trails for hiking and horseback riding. From an automobile, breathtaking landscapes may be seen, including the glaciers for which the park is named.

____ A lot of fishing is done in Glacier National Park.

_X_ There are many attractions in Glacier National Park.

____ In Glacier National Park, there is plenty of wildlife.

2. Some of the lakes in Glacier National Park lie in low, wooded valleys. Others are in the mountains where the air is nearly always cold. Lake McDonald, the largest, is completely surrounded by mountains. One of the smallest, Swiftcurrent Lake, is famous for the clearness of its reflections of neighboring mountain peaks. Although only a half mile long, Iceberg Lake is on such a high mountain that icebergs can be seen floating in this lake, even on very warm summer days. There are about two hundred fifty lakes in this park.

____ Swiftcurrent Lake is the smallest lake in the park.

____ All the lakes have icebergs.

_X_ The lakes of Glacier National Park differ in size and location.

3. The glaciers in Glacier National Park were once part of a vast sheet of ice that covered much of North America thousands of years ago. Today there are between fifty and sixty glaciers in the park; only one of which has a surface area of about one-half square mile. This is Grinnell Glacier, and it has an area of almost 300 acres. Sperry Glacier is the second largest with an area of about 287 acres. Only seven glaciers in the park have areas greater than one fourth square mile. Most of the glaciers are much smaller with areas of only a few hundred square yards

_X_ There are glaciers of varying sizes in Glacier National Park.

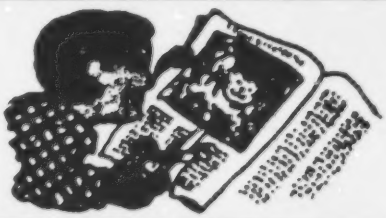
____ Fishing is permitted in the lakes.

____ A vast sheet of ice covered North America years ago.

Use the sounds the letters stand for and the sense of the other words to read each new word in heavy black print below. The two sentences in each box use two different meanings of the same word. Put a circle around the sentence that goes with the picture at the right.

1. (Flowers grow well in soft **earth**.)
2. The **earth** moves around the sun.

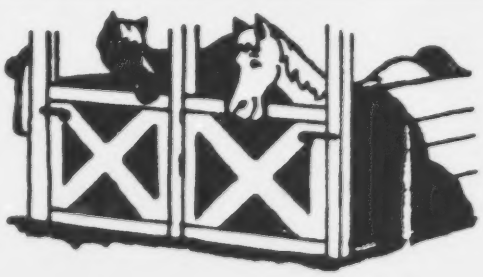
1. This **clip** will hold the papers together.
2. (May I **clip** this picture from the paper?)



1. (My dog sleeps in that **shed**.)
2. I wish my dog didn't **shed**.

1. Wash your hands in the **sink**.
2. (We watched the toy boat **sink**.)

1. Our car **stalls** on a cold morning.
2. (The horses live in **stalls**.)



student does not even have to read the word earth as it is used in two different ways in two different sentences. The third pair of sentences forces the student to read both sentences all the way through to determine which of them is represented by the picture. This pair of sentences is the only set on the page that makes the students attend to the target words. In all of the other sentences the students can identify the correct sentence by attending to other words in the sentence.

Tasks should be designed so that students can move without hazard through the task from beginning to end. Some of the tasks I looked at were two-part tasks. And in some of these the success of working Part 2 depends upon getting all of the items correct in Part 1. If there is no way for students to check their responses in Part 1 before moving on to Part 2, they stand a good chance of doing some very counterproductive work in Part 2.

Student responses should indicate to the teacher whether the students understood the task. In this task in Example 26, the lines drawn between the pictures will not let the teacher know if the students understand before and after. The sentences about the pictures are at the bottom of the page; the students need not relate them to the picture. (On the other hand, the pictures are pretty unclear and ambiguous. Maybe the boy is running for the mail. Maybe

Draw lines from the pictures that show before to those that show after.

Draw lines from one sentence to the other to show what the pictures tell.

The boy fell on the doorstep.

The mailbox was stuffed.

The stopper was in the drain.

Mail fell on the doorstep.

The boy hurt his knee.

Water filled the sink.

the wash basin is a clown face. This is an example of a task that is not well designed for the students, nor for the teacher.

Workbook developers should be reasonable about what they expect students to process. In Example 27 students are supposed to be able to underline the letters for nine consonant blends as they appear in words that make up 15 sentences. It took me a long time to do this task, and I soon adopted the rather tedious strategy of going through each sentence with one blend in mind, then with another and another until I had finished the nine blends. In order to finish this rather punishing task, I often did not read the words in which I found the blends. I suspect that hard-to-teach students will not have the patience even to begin this task. I also know that a better-designed task can be created to get them to attend to consonant blends.

In Example 28 the students are to decide which consonant letter is used the most in each sentence. What the task has to do with reading is a little unclear; what is clear is that the task takes a lot of time and that to do it correctly a student has to use lots of counting and matching skills and does not have to read (in the sense of looking at words and sentences) at all.

The task in Example 29 only requires children to copy words that are underlined. Although the task takes up an entire page and lots of time, there is no requirement that the students read anything other than

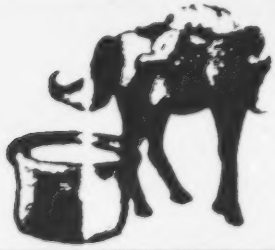
Blends and Sentences

In these sentences some words end with these blends: ld, lf, lp, lt, nd, nt, ct, ft, mp. Underline the letters for these blends. Mark the sentence that goes with the picture.

- ◯ The dog can jump up on a shelf.
- ◯ We will camp near the plant.
- ◯ The tent was in the pond.

- ◯ The boy is to the left of the dog.
- ◯ The boy will act in the play.
- ◯ The dog will help the boy act.

- ◯ The girl can help the elf spin.
- ◯ The elf sold gold to the girl.
- ◯ The elf will help the girl by spinning straw.



- ◯ The colt spilled the milk on the shelf.
- ◯ The colt can't drink until the ice melts.
- ◯ The colt will stamp on the melting ice.

- ◯ The pin is bent.
- ◯ The belt is made of gold.
- ◯ The old man will act near the camp.

Consonant Count

Read each sentence. Decide which consonant letter is used the most. Underline it each time.

1. Rosa ran home around four o'clock.
2. "Mom, I am home," she said. "May I have some ham tonight?"
3. "If you still want ham after your father finishes fixing the fish, you can have it," said her mother.

4. My family lived along that road until last July.
5. Nan, who lives next door, will soon be nine.
6. My favorite part of Tina's costume is her top hat.
7. Up in my room is a pair of purple and pink party shoes.
8. Did you decide to wear the red dress?

Read each sentence. Write each underlined word under the number of the sentence. The first one is done for you. The letters across the top of the puzzle make a word. Finally, write this word to complete the sentence below.

1. So Danny and his father filled their pockets full of walnuts and took them home to dry.
2. Then Danny ran down the hill to the orchard.
3. The leaves on some of the trees were changing from green to orange, red, and yellow.
4. He saw that apples were changing too.
5. "My bear was just a gray squirrel getting ready for winter," Danny said.

1	2	3	4	5
p				
o				
c				
k				
e				
t				
s				

_____

The book was about a _____ bear.

the underlined words. Hard-to-teach students might find it easy, but they certainly would not benefit very much from it.

The task shown in Example 30 would be much improved if the students could show, by drawing arrows within the sentences, how word referents work. Having them draw lines between two columns at the bottom of the page casts a meaningful task in an extraneous form.

An enormous number of observations and suggestions can be made about instructional design. Comments on these few tasks are only an introduction to the topic.

16. Workbooks should contain a finite number of task types and forms.

Special teacher-led instruction is sometimes needed the first two or three times a task form is used, but then less, if any, instruction is required. Example 31 is page 10 of a workbook.

Example 32 is the same form from another page of the workbooks. Except for the title and the wording of the initial sentence in the instruction, nothing has changed. This is a practice I applaud; if students can learn to work a task form, then they can concentrate on the task content. In this workbook, the advantages of these similar forms are somewhat compromised by the fact that these pages are 47 pages apart.

The repetition of task forms is not a common practice; in fact, it is quite uncommon. It is more usual to have almost as many task forms

What's What?

Read the story. Then match the words in dark print with the words they stand for.

Sir Wingate pointed to an inn. "Let's stop **there**[1] for the night," he said.

"I don't think it is open," said Sir Sidney.

"Sure it is," said Sir Wingate. "The lights are on. Can't you see **them**[2]?"

"**I**[3] think we should go to another inn," said Sir Sidney.

"That's silly," said Sir Wingate. "I think **we**[4] should stay."

"Go!"

"Stay!"

After a while Sir Sidney saw the sun begin to rise. "OK," he said. "Let's stay."

Sir Wingate looked at him. "My good man," **he**[5] said. "It's perfectly clear that we should go."

1. there — the lights
2. them — the inn
3. We — Sir Sidney
4. I — Sir Sidney and Sir Wyngate
5. he — Sir Wingate

The Right Word

Find the word in the box that makes each sentence correct.
Write the word on the line.

hundred	basement	afternoon	machine	interesting

1. Rudolf Rust is an interesting person.
2. He works in the basement of his house.
3. That's where he made a special time machine.
4. This afternoon Rudolf took me for a ride.
5. We went one hundred years into the future.

The Right Word for the Job

Choose the word from the box that makes the sentence correct. Write the word on the line.

imitate	blowing	dark	direction
heard	lonely	older	beneath

1. Betty _____ the train whistle late at night.

heard

2. It was like the _____ cry of an animal in the forest.

lonely

3. She went to the window wondering which _____ it was coming from.

direction

4. She tried to _____ the whistle of the train.

imitate

5. In the _____ she couldn't see anything, but she heard the train getting closer.

dark

6. The train rolled along, its whistle _____ in the night.

blowing

7. She thought, "Maybe when I'm _____ I can ride the train."

older

8. Then Betty crawled _____ the quilt and went back to sleep.

beneath

as there are pages of a level of a workbook. Two things can account for this: One is that there are as many different contents of tasks as there are pages in a workbook. The other is that there exists similarity of content, but little similarity of the task form in which that content fits.

The content listings of pages 49 to 78 from three series gives some idea of the variety of content common to workbooks (see Examples 33, 34, and 35). In two programs, three different forms were used twice. In the third program, no forms were repeated.

My conclusion is that in these three examples there is a veritable cafeteria of content, and that there is very little repetition of task form. My questions concern sufficiency and effectiveness: (a) Are there a sufficient number of tasks to provide for the massed practice that might enable hard-to-teach students to learn all of that content? (b) Do the almost continuously varying task forms make it more difficult or less difficult for students to learn the content? I suspect there is too little of too much and that continuous variety of both task form and task content contributes to the problems of hard-to-teach students.

Example 33

Program A, pages 49-78

49. Practice with words with ine.
50. Practice with oo.
51. Choosing titles.
52. Word identification.
53. Using common syllables a, be, un, ful, ly, ness.
54. Vocabulary identification and use of cl, bl, pl.
55. Word referents.
56. Plural ves on words ending with f.
57. Following directions.
58. Alphabetical order.
59. Classifying words.
60. Practice with words with ie.
61. Compound words, comprehension.
62. Commas as a comprehension aid.
63. Noting details.
64. Syllables.
65. Puzzles.
66. Word identification.
67. Practice with words with ash.
68. Base words and endings.
69. Practice with words with spr and str.
70. Practice with and, comprehension.
71. Classifying words.
72. Contractions.
73. Sequencing.
74. Practice with words with sw.
75. Long and short e sounds, comprehension.
76. Multi-meaning words.
77. Practice with words with ward, comprehension.
78. Noting details.

Example 34

Program B, pages 49-78

49. Words of the senses.
50. Doubling the final consonant.
51. Matching sentences to pictures.
52. Questions about story in reader.
53. Dropping the final e before ed and ing.
54. Literal and figurative language.
55. Questions about story in reader.
56. Puzzle.
57. Adding ed and ing to words that end in y.
58. Reading a chart.
59. Vocabulary, context clues.
60. Spelling of consonant phonemes.
61. Synonyms.
62. Questions about story in reader.
63. Matching sentences to pictures.
64. Commas in series and direct address.
65. Word meanings in a glossary.
66. Word identification.
67. Unit test.
68. Vowel sounds represented by ou, u, oo.
69. Comparatives.
70. Realism and fantasy, literal and figurative language.
71. Vowel sounds uw, oo.
72. Constructing direct address.
73. Quotation marks.
74. Follow directions.
75. Spellings with ou, ow, oy, or.
76. Syllable stress, dividing syllables.
77. Practice with shall and will.
78. Questions about story in reader.

Example 35

Program C, pages 49-78

49. Word meaning.
50. Story ending.
51. Word pairs.
52. Cause and effect.
53. Following directions.
54. Vowel sounds.
55. Main idea and sequencing.
56. Outlining.
57. Vowels and compound words.
58. Alphabetizing.
59. Sequencing.
60. Vowel practice.
61. Phonetic spellings.
62. Main idea.
63. Comprehension questions.
64. Word identification.
65. Questions about stories from reader.
66. Writing dialogues.
67. Vocabulary.
68. Logic task.
69. Following a chart.
70. Finding details.
71. Words in context.
72. Similes and metaphors.
73. Predicates of sentences.
74. Sentence completion.
75. Poetry comprehension.
76. Sentence completion.
77. Sound identification.
78. Character description.

17. The art that appears on workbook pages must be consistent with the prose of the task.

Pictures in workbooks would be the subject for another book. But briefly, art that is confusing and inappropriate is bad, no matter how "artistic" its quality or how colorful it looks on a page. The art that appears in workbooks has been discussed in other places, and I am sure that criticism of workbook art is not a new topic to publishers of basal programs. So, I will confine myself to only a few examples.

Tasks which require students to pick a word, phrase, or sentence, to match a picture are found in many workbooks. Unless great care is taken with the art, such tasks are distressing. There are three items in the task in Example 36. There are probably 23 reasons for students to check wrong answers. Some of the problems originate in the art, some in the amount of inference the workbook designer had in mind. Item 1 is a very tiny picture of a farm with a barn. It shows a fence with what is perhaps corn next to it, and a tree with what are perhaps apples growing on it. To accommodate a long line of type, there has been a square cut from the illustration in the upper left-hand corner. The student is to check the answers the picture is "true of." (I will note, but not discuss, the difficulties inherent in the question "Which of these is true of this farm?") I would like to list some of the thoughts that could pass through a student's mind as he or she confronts this task. These are thoughts which a student

Look at the picture. Then read the question and check the answers.

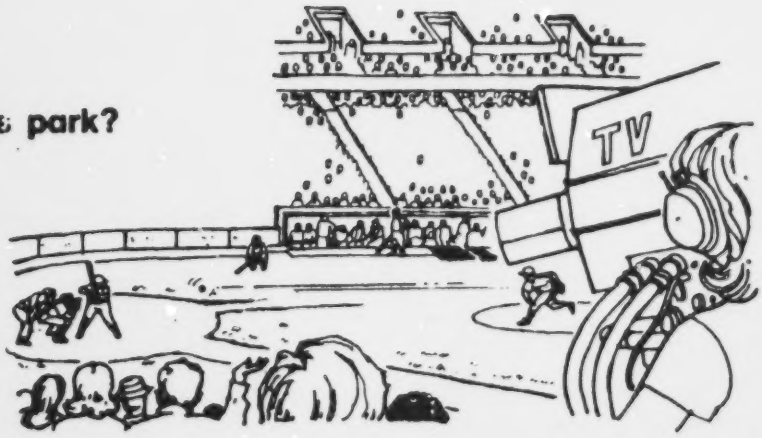
Which of these is true of this farm?

___ new truck

___ apples to chew

___ corn grew

___ crew of apple pickers



Which of these is true of this park?

___ TV news

___ good stew

___ threw a ball

___ cats mew

Which of these is true of this street?

___ a few clouds

___ birds flew

___ crew of workers

___ new paint

might have who is acquainted with a farm, with the notion of "true," and with a strategy for thinking hard about each possible answer. (I will leave to your imagination the thoughts of a hard-to-teach student not fully acquainted with farms and true, nor equipped with such a sophisticated answering strategy.)

"This is a picture of a farm. Why do you suppose that square is cut out? Do you suppose there was a truck there? This looks like a good farm. 'New truck.' The farmer could have a new truck. My teacher is always telling us to visualize things when we read. I'll bet there was a truck there. I'll check truck. 'Apples to chew.' Are those apples on that tree? Maybe they're peaches; maybe it's just a different kind of leaf. Maybe my eyes are getting bad. Maybe I need glasses. Well, this looks like a trick to me. I'm not going to check 'apples to chew.' Anyway, who would chew apples on a tree? 'Corn grew.' Look at that stuff growing on the fence. That's not corn, those are like the hollyhocks in my grandmother's garden. I'm not going to check that one. 'Crew of apple pickers.' Well, I don't see any apple pickers, and if there's only one tree, that farmer is going to pick his own apples. I'm not going to check this one, but maybe apple here means apple there. I'm going to go back and check 'apples to chew.' I sure wish this artist drew better pictures."

This student will not have too much trouble with the second item, except perhaps to realize that whereas the first item gave him a lot of trouble, this one is ridiculously simple. When he reaches Item 3, his major problem will be with 'birds flew.' After all, the birds in the picture are flying. "Oh well," he says to himself, "It's a toss-up. If this is the old trick question, I shouldn't check it; if they're just trying to make me read an ew word, I'd better check it." And since this student is a survivor, he checks "birds flew."

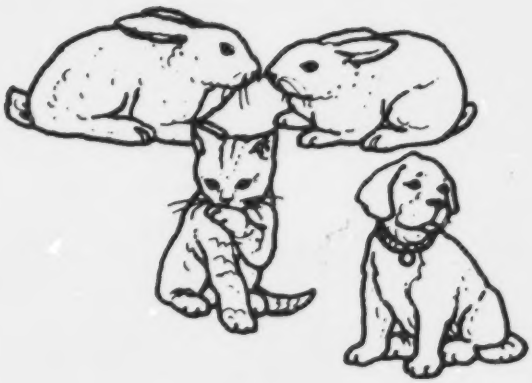
Surely there are better ways to construct tasks using ew words than this one. The art takes up a lot of room, yet each picture is tiny. Such inadequate art has a lot to do with making this task a guessing game.

Sometimes art would be better if it were not there at all. Example 37 also has three items. The students are told to underline "the sentence in the story that tells about all the story sentences," in other words, the main idea. I predict that for students accustomed to matching sentences to pictures, this task will be very confusing. My guess is that there will be a number of students who will try, for each item, to pick out the sentence that matches the picture. The pictures do not help students do the task; rather, they increase the probability of student error.

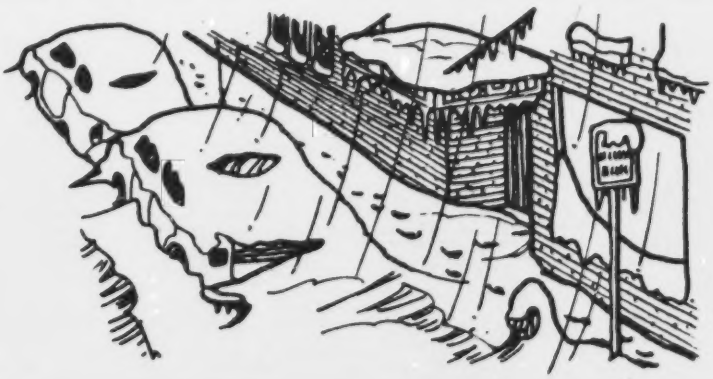
The hazards of using illustrations that serve as prompts for students to identify beginning, middle, or ending sounds are well known. One of my colleagues brought in this task. His child's teacher had marked it.

Example 37

Read each story. Underline the sentence in the story that tells about all the story sentences.



The boys and girls have pets.
Mike has some rabbits.
Kip has a cat.
Anna and her sister have a dog.



Snow fell on the houses.
It fell on the people.
It fell on the city streets.
Snow fell everywhere.

Mr. Fell likes to walk his dog.
Mr. Fell likes to walk dogs.
Mr. Fell likes to walk Bill's dog.
Mr. Fell likes to walk Kim's dog.

A graduate student who was easily able to use the long vowel sound in the middle of each word in Example 38 as part of her identification procedure misidentified two pictures on this page (car for jeep and crown for queen). I still am bewildered by one of the pictures (so, perhaps, was the child who missed it). If one looks at the page from the point of view of a hard-to-teach student, less sure about the middle sound of any word, the possibilities for error are numerous: toothpaste for tube, lamb for sheep, rats for mice, worm for snake, horse for mule, ice for cube, etc.

It is my opinion that this type of task should be abandoned by workbook developers. It is not likely that any set of pictures, no matter how clearly drawn, will be interpreted in the same way by their users. This task's potential for confusing students seems far greater than its possible benefit to them.

Finally, and these are very serious points, problems of perspective and proportion deserve careful attention. It seems likely that peculiar use of perspective and instances of real-life small objects drawn the same size as real-life big objects can cause confusion, especially for hard-to-teach students.

Equally careful attention should be given to the question of style. Workbooks as a means of exposing students to a variety of artistic styles may have value for art appreciation; however, it is not likely that all styles of art have equal pedagogical value. The primary

Long Sounds

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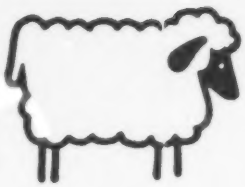
u o e a



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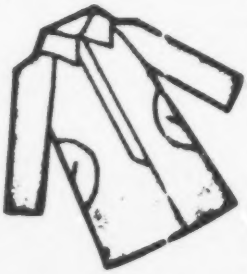
u i a o



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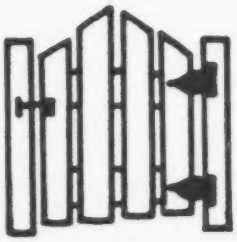
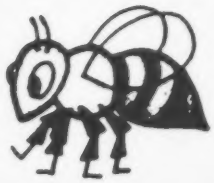


a o e u



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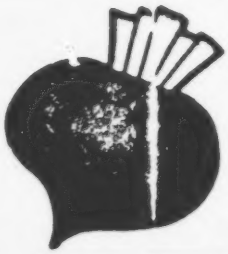

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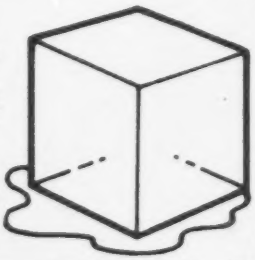

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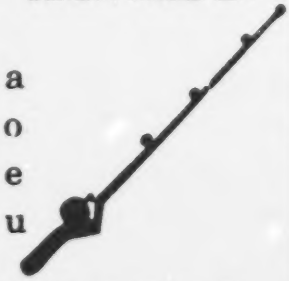

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purpose of workbook art must be always kept in mind. I see its primary purpose as that of facilitating students' understanding of something about reading.

Art that is stylized beyond the real-world experience of many students is not likely to achieve that purpose. Example 39 is one of only many examples of workbook art that I judged to be pedagogically unsound. In addition to problems of proportion (the spider is as big as the microscope), there are problems of reality. Since students doing the task are supposed to be discerning reality from fantasy, I think the art is confusing rather than facilitating.

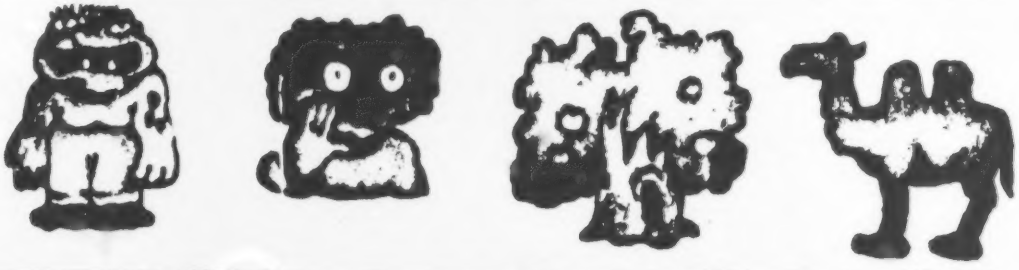
18. Cute, nonfunctional, space- and time-consuming tasks should be avoided.

In a sense, both paper and time are money. Students spend only so much time in school, and they can deal with only so many pieces of paper. Their schools can buy only so many pieces of paper. What is on each paper governs how a segment of student time is spent. How that time relates to reading should be a primary consideration. Example 40 task takes a long time to do, especially if the teacher is one to insist that each circle be completely colored. Furthermore, the teacher does not know (and this is in the realm of instructional design) why the student performing the task is right or wrong. A response mode which included marking the syllables would take the student much less time and provide the teacher with more information about the performance of the student.

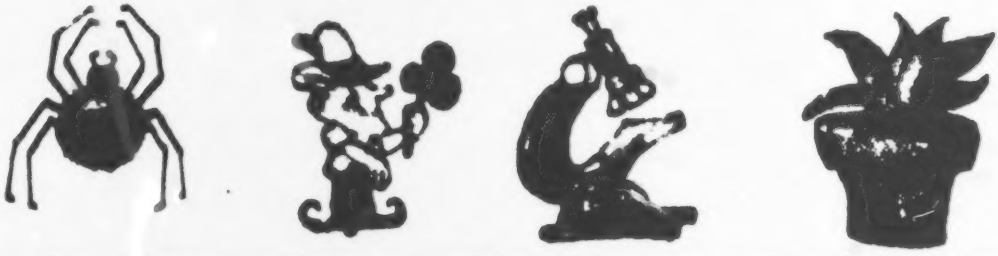
For each group below mark an X through the picture or word that does not belong.

1. Fantasy

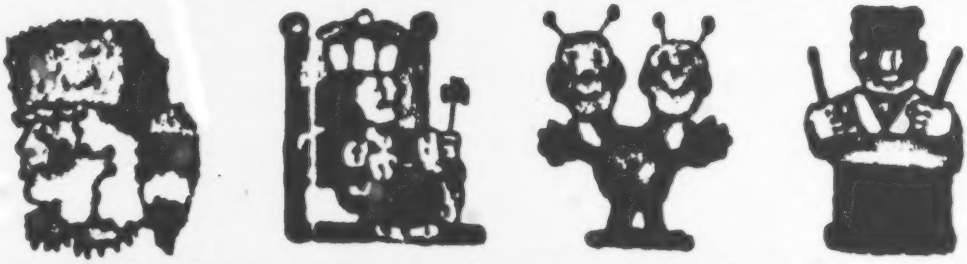
2. True Story



3. Science Article



4. Historical Fiction



5. Article

fantasy
information
nonfiction
captions

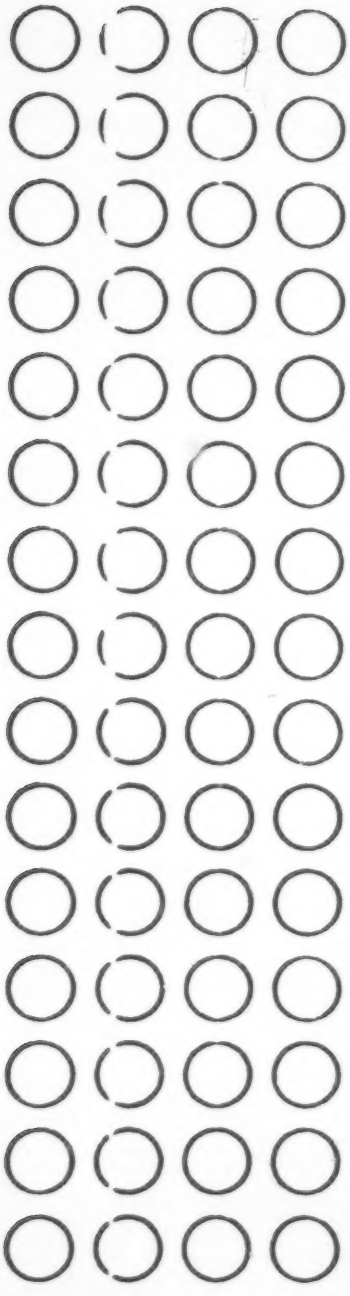
6. Biography

birthplace
schooling
career
fairy godmother

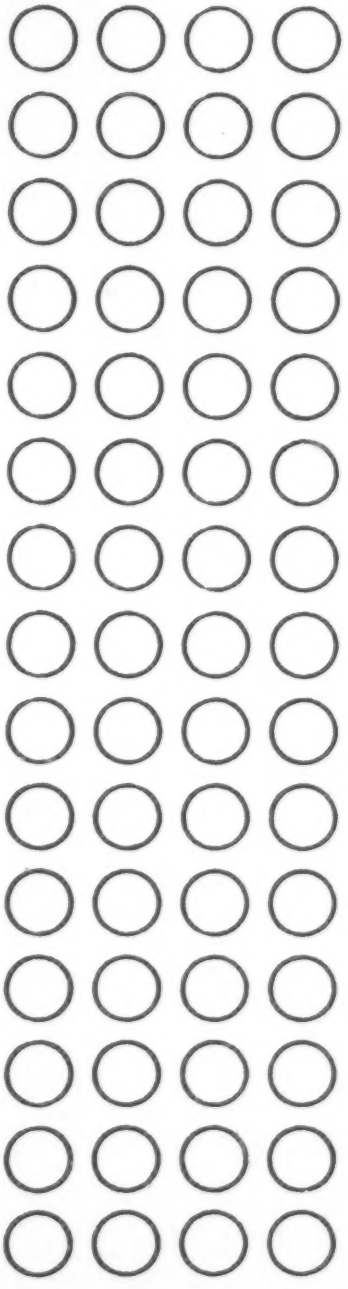
Example 40

SYLLABLES-PARTS IN WORDS

Read each word. Color the number of circles to tell how many syllables there are in each word.



living
Monday
window
another
dropped
shades
sing
kettle
whistle
door
covered
Walter
open
bed
bedroom



clouds
because
apartment
everyone
mail
tea
Rumpelstiltskin
name
America
grandfather
thanked
father
dinosaur
together
dump

In the workbooks I looked at there were many examples of inefficient use of time and space. These are task conditions that I suspect seriously affect the ultimate reading performance of hard-to-teach students.

19. When appropriate, workbook tasks should be accompanied by brief explanations of purpose for both teachers and students.

Teachers should know why the task exists, and students should have some idea of what they are doing. Headings and other explanations for students should be in language the students are likely to understand.

The following task titles were selected at random from several workbooks. My description of what each task is about follows in parentheses. I do not think these titles convey much of a message to most of the hard-to-teach students doing the tasks. This lack of message means it is likely that these students do not have a clue about the purpose of the work in these tasks.

1. The Long and Short of It (for long and short vowels)
2. The Boy Roy (for practice with the oi sound)
3. That's Not a Ship (for a task with sh and th sounds)
4. Who or Which is? (for a task that involves only which)
5. Putting Down Roots (for practice with root words)
6. Contents Clues (for a table-of-contents task)
7. Pass the Word (for a dictionary task)
8. The Right Fit (a vocabulary/picture task)
9. Now Hear This (a vocabulary/picture task)
10. Hear! Hear! (initial and final sounds high)

11. In Every Detail (picking out details)
12. Your Fingers Do the Walking (a dictionary task)
13. It All Adds Up (reading with multiple choice questions)
14. Mainly the Idea. What's the Big Idea? Get the Idea? (for finding the main idea)

The list below contains a more straightforward set of titles. These were also randomly selected from workbooks.

1. Cause and Effect
2. Alphabetical Order
3. Compound Words
4. Fiction and Non-Fiction
5. Similes-Metaphors
6. Long Vowels
7. Consonants

These titles are not clever, not funny, but the message of each is clear. They are more efficient. The hard-to-teach students do not have to figure out the purpose of the task from a bizarre title or the context of the task.

20. English-major humor should be avoided.

How to test for the hit rate of humor in workbooks is probably the subject of yet another extraneous doctoral dissertation, but I propose that the following example (41) of what I call "English-major" humor is not appreciated by too many students engaged in doing their workbook tasks.

Example 41

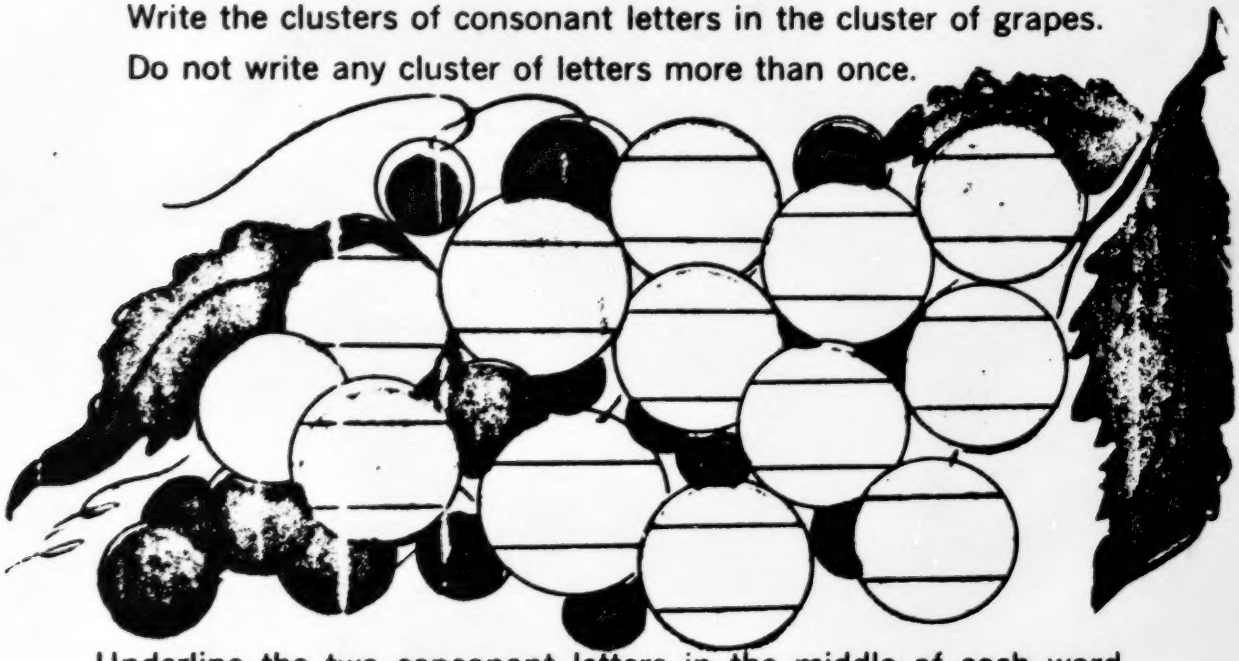
Look for the Consonant Cluster

Underline the cluster of consonant letters in each word below.

sweet **border** **raft** **sender** **sprain** **skill** **free**

basket **street** **best** **green** **fender** **price** **glass**

Write the clusters of consonant letters in the cluster of grapes.
Do not write any cluster of letters more than once.



Underline the two consonant letters in the middle of each word in the boxes below. Choose the word from each box to complete each sentence and circle it.

1. ____ is the coldest time of the year. | **walnut** | **winter** |

2. The lion took ____ care of her cubs. | **temper** | **tender** |

3. The children began to ____ to each other. | **murmur** | **mongoose** |

4. He walked ____ a ladder. | **velvet** | **under** |

Does this task represent an attempt to teach students that consonant clusters are somehow like grape clusters, or is this supposed to be a joke? I suspect that both the imagery and the joke pass right by most students as they laboriously copy the letters on the lines in each grape. The task would be instructionally much more viable if it required the students to circle consonant clusters as they appeared in words. At least there would be a chance that students would note how the clusters functioned in words. This suggestion fits into the guidelines on instructional design and instructional design is probably not very compatible with English-major humor. For the sake of all children, but especially for hard-to-teach children, I would urge workbook developers to concentrate on instructional design and resist the allure of English-major humor.

Conclusion

What is the proportion of tasks in workbooks that do not adhere to the guidelines I have laid out? I decided that an attempt to answer this question would be dangerous as well as presumptuous: dangerous because some people might not like my judgments and presumptuous because of the tentative nature of the guidelines. The guidelines are a list of suggestions based on my own classroom observation, readings of tasks, and curriculum-writing experience. They need to be thought about, evaluated, added to, and perhaps

subtracted from. I leave it to developers of workbook materials and to teachers using the materials to figure out the proportion of tasks in workbooks that adhere to these twenty guidelines.

A goal of reading instruction is that students relate what they are reading to their own experience. Can workbook tasks call upon students to integrate their own and varying background knowledge and schemas into their workbook answers? My observation is that while many workbook tasks assume the students working the tasks have a great deal of world knowledge, vocabulary not taught in the program, and good problem-solving strategies, not very many require students to integrate their own reactions into their workbook responses. The problem of designing tasks that will cause students to integrate their own experiences into their responses is an interesting and not impossible challenge to teachers and to workbook developers.

I would like to conclude by returning to one of the guidelines, the one about workbook tasks providing a systematic and cumulative review of what is being taught in the program. This kind of review would require an integration of what is in any given set of workbook tasks, not only with the lessons they are correlated with, but with the lessons that have proceeded them. For this to be done properly means that workbooks must be carefully planned and developed with other parts of the basal program, and not done as separate projects. Central

to the notion of systematic and cumulative review are application tasks. Application tasks are either missing completely or occur infrequently in the workbooks I looked at. Application tasks would, for example, require students to operate on one passage with several of the comprehension concepts they have been taught, or, as another example, have students use a number of structural analysis and phonics skills with one set of words. So, students would read a paragraph, find the main ideas, the sequence of events, the important details, and review some of the vocabulary. Or they would underline a number of the letter combinations, base words, and affixes that occur in a list of words they have just read. Wouldn't such tasks be more like the real challenges of learning to comprehend from text or of figuring out how letters, sounds, and parts of words add up to meaning, than simply inferring the details of three paragraphs or figuring out which sp word to fill in a blank?

I hope that a collaboration of teachers, researchers, and program developers can improve workbooks. All of the hours students spend working and practicing in their workbooks have to be considered a serious part of reading instruction. What is provided for them in those books should be given the serious consideration of teachers of grade school students and publishers of the materials used in their classrooms.

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Example Sources

The workbook tasks used as examples in this paper come from the basal reading programs of the following publishers:

1. The Economy Company, Oklahoma City, 1975
2. Ginn and Company, Lexington, Mass., 1976
3. Harper & Row, New York, 1976
4. Holt, Rinehart & Winston, New York, 1977
5. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1979
6. Scott Foresman & Co., Glenview, Ill., 1981

Appendix

Some Guidelines for Workbook Tasks

1. A sufficient proportion of workbook tasks should be relevant to the instruction that is going on in the rest of the unit or lesson.

2. Another portion of workbook tasks should provide for a systematic and cumulative review of what has already been taught.

3. Workbooks should reflect the most important (and workbook-appropriate) aspects of what is being taught in the reading program. Less important aspects should remain in the teacher's guide as voluntary activities.

4. Workbooks should contain, in a form that is readily accessible to students and teachers, extra tasks for students who need extra practice.

5. The vocabulary and concept level of workbook tasks should relate to that of the rest of the program and to the students using the program.

6. The language used in workbook tasks must be consistent with that used in the rest of the lesson and in the rest of the workbook.

7. Instructions to students should be clear, unambiguous, and easy to follow; brevity is a virtue.

8. The layout of pages should combine attractiveness with utility.

9. Workbook tasks should contain enough content so that there is a chance a student doing the task will learn something and not simply be exposed to something.

10. Tasks that require students to make discriminations must be preceded by a sufficient number of tasks that provide practice on components of the discriminations.

11. The content of workbook tasks must be accurate and precise; workbook tasks must not present wrong information nor perpetuate misrules.

12. At least some workbook tasks should be fun and have an obvious payoff to them.

13. Most student response modes should be consistent from task to task.

14. Student response modes should be the closest possible to reading and writing.

15. The instructional design of individual tasks and of task sequences should be carefully planned.

16. Workbooks should contain a finite number of task types and forms.

17. The art that appears on workbook pages must be consistent with the prose of the task.

18. Cute, nonfunctional, space- and time-consuming tasks should be avoided.

19. When appropriate, tasks should be accompanied by brief explanations of purpose for both teachers and students.

20. English-major humor should be avoided.

Footnotes

[1]In some schools two adopted basal programs were used, one for the "regular" students and the other for the slower students. In these schools procedures and materials from two programs were in evidence, but students in one program seldom, if ever, were given materials from the other program.

[2]One third-grade teacher made a comment that may be illuminating. She said that when the children are tested on tests that come from the basal program, and the teachers are evaluated by how well the students do on the tests, everyone is, of course, going to spend all the available time teaching what will help the students do better on the tests.

[3]The controversies about how to teach reading are well known and will not be discussed here. What even the most opinionated of those engaged in these controversies just might agree on is that arguments about how to teach reading are not nearly as important to students for whom learning to read is easy as to students for whom learning to read is hard.

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